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CHAPTER VII.

OLD HANDS.

KARL STEINMETZ lifted his pen from the paper before him and scratched his forehead with his forefinger.

'Now, I wonder,' he said aloud, 'how many bushels there are in a ton. *Ach*, how am I to find that out? These English weights and measures, this English money, when there is a metrical system!'

He sat and hardly looked up when the clock struck seven. It was a quiet room, this in which he sat, the library of Paul's London house. The noise of Piccadilly reached his ears as a faint roar, not entirely unpleasant, but sociable and full of life. Accustomed as he was to the great silence of Russia, where sound seems lost in space, the hum of a crowded humanity was a pleasant change to this philosopher, who loved his kind while fully recognising its little weaknesses.

While he sat there still wondering how many bushels of seed made a ton, Paul Alexis came into the room. The younger man was in evening dress. He looked at the clock rather eagerly.

'Will you dine here?' he asked, and Steinmetz wheeled round in his chair. 'I am going out to dinner,' he explained further.

'Ah!' said the elder man.

'I am going to Mrs. Sydney Bamborough's.'

Steinmetz bowed his head gravely. He said nothing. He

was not looking at Paul, but at the pattern of the carpet. There was a short silence. Then Paul said with entire simplicity:

‘I shall probably ask her to marry me.’

‘And she will probably say yes.’

‘I am not so sure about that,’ said Paul with a laugh. For this man was without conceit. He had gradually been forced to admit that there are among men persons whose natural inclination is towards evil, persons who value not the truth, nor hold by honesty. But he was guileless enough to believe that women are not so. He actually believed that women are truthful and open and honourable. He believes it still, which is somewhat startling. There are a few such dullards yet. ‘I do not see why she should,’ he went on gravely. He was standing by the empty fire-place, a manly, upright figure, one who was not very clever, not brilliant at all, somewhat slow in his speech, but sure, deadly sure, in the honesty of his purpose.

Karl Steinmetz looked at him and smiled openly with the quaint air of resignation that was his.

‘You have never seen her, eh?’ inquired Paul.

Steinmetz paused, then he told a lie, a good one, well told, deliberately.

‘No.’

‘We are going to the opera, Box F 2. If you come in I shall have pleasure in introducing you. The sooner you know each other the better. I am sure you will approve.’

‘I think you ought to marry money.’

‘Why?’

Steinmetz laughed.

‘Oh,’ he answered, ‘because everybody does who can. There is Catrina Lanovitch, an estate as big as yours, adjoining yours. A great Russian family, a good girl who . . . is willing.’

Paul laughed, a good wholesome laugh.

‘You are inclined to exaggerate my manifold and obvious qualifications,’ he said. ‘Catrina is a very nice girl, but I do not think she would marry me even if I asked her.’

‘Which you do not intend to do.’

‘Certainly not.’

‘Then you will make an enemy of her,’ said Steinmetz quietly. ‘It may be inconvenient, but that cannot be helped. A woman scorned . . . you know. Shakespeare or the Bible, I always mix them up. No, Paul, Catrina Lanovitch is a dangerous enemy.

She has been making love to you these last four years, and you would have seen it if you had not been a fool! I am afraid, my good Paul, you are a fool, God bless you for it!

'I think you are wrong,' said Paul rather curtly; 'not about me being a fool, but about Catrina Lanovitch. If you are right, however, it only makes me dislike her instead of being perfectly indifferent to her.'

His honest face flushed up finely, and he turned away to look at the clock again.

'I hate your way of talking about women, Steinmetz,' he said. 'You're a cynical old beast, you know.'

'Heaven forbid, my dear Prince. I admire all women—they are so clever, so innocent, so pure-minded. Do not your English novels prove it, your English stage, your newspapers, so heightened? Who supports the novelist, the play-wright, the actor—who but your English ladies?'

'Better than being cooks—like your German ladies,' retorted Paul stoutly—'if you *are* German this evening. Better than being cooks.'

'I doubt it! I very much doubt it, my friend. At what time shall I present myself at Box F 2 this evening?'

'About nine—as soon as you like.'

Paul looked at the clock. The pointers lagged horribly. He knew that the carriage was certain to be at the door, waiting in the quiet street with its great restless horses, its two perfectly-trained men, its gleaming lamps and shining harness. But he would not allow himself the luxury of being the first arrival. Paul had himself well in hand. At last it was time to go.

'See you later,' he said.

'Thank you—yes,' replied Steinmetz, without looking up.

So Paul Howard Alexis sallied forth to seek the hand of the lady of his choice, and as he left his own door that lady was receiving Claude de Chauville in her drawing-room. The two had not met for some weeks—not indeed since Etta had told the Frenchman that she could not marry him. Her invitation to dine, couched in the usual friendly words, had been the first move in that game commonly called 'bluff.' Claude de Chauville's acceptance of the same had been the second move. And these two persons, who were not afraid of each other, shook hands with a pleasant smile of greeting, while Paul hurried towards them through the busy streets.

'Am I forgiven—that I am invited to dinner?' asked de Chauville imperturbably, when the servant had left them alone.

Etta was one of those women who are conscious of their dress. Some may protest that a lady moving in such circles would not be so. But in all circles women are only women, and in every class of life we meet such as Etta Bamborough—women who, while they talk, glance down and rearrange a flower or a piece of lace. It is a mere habit, seemingly small and unimportant; but it marks the woman and sets her apart.

Etta was standing on the hearthrug, beautifully dressed—too beautifully dressed, it is possible, to sit down. Her maid had a moment earlier confessed that she could do no more, and Etta had come downstairs a vision of luxury, of womanly loveliness. Nevertheless, there appeared to be something amiss. She was so occupied with a flower at her shoulder that she did not answer at once.

'Forgiven for what?' she asked at length, in that pre-occupied tone of voice which tells wise men that only questions of dress will be considered.

De Chauville shrugged his shoulders in his graceful Gallic way.

'*Mon Dieu!*' he exclaimed. 'For a crime which requires no excuse, and no explanation other than a mirror.'

She looked up at him innocently.

'A mirror?'

'Yours. Have you forgiven me for falling in love with you? It is, I am told, a crime that women sometimes condone.'

'It was no crime,' she said. She had heard the wheels of Paul's carriage. 'It was a misfortune. Please let us forget that it ever happened.'

De Chauville twirled his neat moustache, looking keenly at her the while.

'You forget,' he said. 'But I—will remember.'

She did not answer, but turned with a smile to greet Paul.

'I think you know each other,' she said gracefully when she had shaken hands, and the two men bowed. They were foreigners, be it understood. There were three languages in which they could understand each other with equal ease.

'Where *is* Maggie?' exclaimed Mrs. Bamborough. 'She is always late.'

'When I am here,' reflected de Chauville. But he did not say it.

Miss Delafield kept them waiting a few minutes, and during that time Etta Sydney Bamborough gave a very fine display of prowess with the double-stringed bow. When a man attempts to handle this delicate weapon, he usually makes, if one may put it thus crudely, an ass of himself. He generally succeeds in snapping one and probably both of the strings, injuring himself most certainly in the process.

Not so, however, this clever lady. She had a smile and an epigram for Claude de Chauville, a grave air of sympathetic interest in more serious affairs for Paul Alexis. She was bright and amusing, guileless and very worldly-wise in the same breath—simple for Paul and a match for de Chauville within the space of three seconds. Withal she was a beautiful woman beautifully dressed. A thousand times too wise to scorn her womanhood, as learned fools are prone to do in print and on platform in these wordy days, but wielding the strongest power on earth—to wit, that same womanhood—with daring and with skill. A learned woman is not of much account in the world. A clever woman rules as much of it as lies in her neighbourhood—that is to say, as much as she cares to rule. For women love power, but they do not care to wield it at a distance.

Paul was asked to take Mrs. Sydney Bamborough down to dinner by the lady herself.

'*Mon ami,*' she said in a quiet aside to de Chauville before making her request, 'it is the first time the Prince dines here.'

She spoke in French. Maggie and Paul were talking together at the other end of the room. De Chauville bowed in silence.

At dinner the conversation was necessarily general, and as such is not worth reporting. No general conversation, one finds, is of much value when set down in black and white. It is not even grammatical nowadays. To be more correct, let us note that the talk lay between Etta and Monsieur de Chauville, who had a famous supply of epigrams and bright nothings delivered in such a way that they really sounded like wisdom. Etta was equal to him, sometimes capping his sharp wit, sometimes contenting herself with silvery laughter. Maggie Delafield was rather *distracte*, as de Chauville noted. The girl's dislike for him was

an iron that entered the quick of his vanity anew every time he saw her. There was no petulance in the aversion, such as he had perceived with other maidens who were only resenting a passing negligence, or seeking to pique his curiosity. This was a steady, and, if you will, unmaidenly aversion which Maggie conscientiously attempted to conceal.

Paul, it is to be feared, was what hostesses call heavy in hand. He laughed where he saw something to laugh at, but not elsewhere, which in some circles is considered morose and in bad form. He joined readily enough in the conversation, but originated nothing. Those topics which occupied his mind did not present themselves as suitable to this occasion. His devotion to Etta was quite obvious, and he was simple enough not to care that it should be so.

Maggie was by turns quite silent and very talkative. When Paul and Etta were speaking together she never looked at them, but fixedly at her own plate, at a decanter, or a salt-cellar. When she spoke she addressed her remarks—valueless enough in themselves—exclusively to the man she disliked, Claude de Chauxville.

There was something amiss in the pretty little room. There were shadows seated around that little table *à quatre*, beside the guests in their pretty dresses and their black coats; silent cold shadows, who ate nothing, while they chilled the dainty food and took the sweetness from the succulent dishes. These shadows had crept in unawares, a silent *partie carrée*, to take their phantom places at the table, and only Etta seemed able to jostle hers aside and talk it down. She took the whole burden of the conversation upon her pretty shoulders, and bore it through the little banquet with unerring skill and unflinching good-humour. In the midst of her merriest laughter, the clever grey eyes would flit from one man's face to the other. Paul had been brought here to ask her to marry him. Claude de Chauxville had been invited that he might be tacitly presented to his successful rival. Maggie was there because she was a woman, and made the necessary fourth. Puppets all, and two of them knew it. And some of us know it all our lives. We are living, moving puppets. We let ourselves be dragged here and pushed there, the victim of one who happens to have more energy of mind, a greater steadfastness of purpose, a keener grasp of the situation called life. We smirk and smile, and lose the game because we

have begun by being anvils, and are afraid of trying to be a hammer.

But Etta Sydney Bamborough had to deal with metal of a harder grain than the majority of us. Claude de Chauxville was for the moment forced to assume the humble rôle of anvil because he had no choice. Maggie Delafield was passive for the time being, because that which would make her active was no more than a tiny seedling in her heart. The girl bid fair to be one of those women who develop late, who ripen slowly, like the best fruit.

During the drive to the Opera House the two women in Etta's snug little brougham were silent. Etta had her thoughts to occupy her. She was at the crucial point of a difficult game. She could not afford to allow even a friend to see so much as the corner of the cards she held.

In the luxurious box it was easily enough arranged—Etta and Paul together in front, de Chauxville and Maggie at the other corner of the box.

'I have asked my friend Karl Steinmetz to come in during the evening,' said Paul to Etta when they were seated. 'He is anxious to make your acquaintance. He is my . . . prime minister over in Russia.'

Etta smiled graciously.

'It is kind of him,' she answered, 'to be anxious to make my acquaintance.'

She was apparently listening to the music; in reality she was hurrying back mentally over half a dozen years. She had never had much to do with the stout German philosopher, but she knew enough of him to scorn the faint hope that he might have forgotten her name and her individuality. Etta Bamborough had never been disconcerted in life yet; this little incident came very near to bringing about the catastrophe.

'At what time,' she asked, 'is he coming in?'

'About half-past nine.'

Etta had a watch on a bracelet on her arm. Such women always know the time.

It was a race, and Etta won it. She had only half an hour. De Chauxville was there, and Maggie with her quiet, honest eyes. But the widow of Sydney Bamborough made Paul ask her to be his wife, and she promised to give him his answer later. She did it despite a thousand difficulties and more than one danger—

accomplished it with, as the sporting people say, plenty to spare—before the door behind them was opened by the attendant, and Karl Steinmetz, burly, humorously imperturbable and impene-trable, stood smiling gravely on the situation.

He saw Claude de Chauville, and before the Frenchman had turned round the expression on Steinmetz' large and placid countenance had changed from the self-consciousness usually preceding an introduction to one of a dim recognition.

'I have had the pleasure of meeting madame somewhere before, I think. In St. Petersburg, was it not?'

Etta, composed and smiling, said that it was so, and introduced him to Maggie. De Chauville took the opportunity of leaving that young lady's side, and placing himself near enough to Paul and Etta to completely frustrate any further attempts at confidential conversation.

For a moment Steinmetz and Paul were left standing together.

'I have had a telegram,' said Steinmetz in Russian. 'We must go back to Tver. There is cholera again. When can you come?'

Beneath his heavy moustache Paul bit his lip.

'In three days,' he answered.

'True? You will come with me?' inquired Steinmetz under cover of the clashing music.

'Of course.'

Steinmetz looked at him curiously. He glanced towards Etta, but he said nothing.

CHAPTER VIII.

SAFE.

THE season wore on to its perihelion—a period, the scientific books advise us, of the highest clang and crash of speed and whirl, of the greatest brilliancy and deepest glow of a planet's existence. The business of life, the pursuit of pleasure, and the scientific demolition of our common enemy, Time, received all the care which such matters require.

Débutantes bloomed and were duly culled by aged connoisseurs of such wares, or by youthful aspirants with the means to pay the piper in the form of a handsome settlement. The usual number of young persons of the gentler sex entered the lists of life, with the mistaken notion that it is love that makes the

world go round, to ride away from the joust wiser and sadder women.

There was the same round of conventional pleasures which reader and his humble servant have mixed in deeply or *dilettante*, according to his taste or capacity for such giddy work. There was withal the usual heart-burning, heart-bartering, heart—anything you will but breaking. For we have not breaking hearts among us to-day. Providence, it would seem, has run short of the commodity, and deals out only a few among a number of persons.

Amidst the whirl of rout, and ball, and picnic, race-meeting, polo-match, and what-not, Paul Howard Alexis stalked misunderstood, distrusted; an object of ridicule to some, of pity to others, of impatience to all. A man, if it please you, with a purpose—a purpose at the latter end of the nineteenth century, when most of us, having decided that there is no future, take it upon ourselves to despise the present.

Paul soon discovered that he was found out—at no time a pleasant condition of things, except, indeed, when callers are about. That which Eton and Cambridge had failed to lay its finger upon, every match-making mother had found out for herself in a week. That the discovery had been carefully kept in each maternal breast, it is needless to relate. *Ces dames* are not confidential upon such matters between themselves. When they have scented their game they stalk him, and if possible bag him in a feline splitude which has no fears for stout ambitious hearts. The fear is that some other prowling mother of an eligible maiden may hit upon the same scent.

Paul was invited to quiet dinners and a little music, to quiet dinners without the music, to a very little music and no dinner whatever. The number of ladies who had a seat in a box thrown upon their hands at the last minute—a seat next to Angelina in her new pink, or Blanche in her sweet *poult de soie*—the number of these ladies one can only say was singular, because politeness forbids one to suggest that it was suspicious. Soft cheeks became rosy at his approach—partly, perhaps, because soft and dainty toes in satin slippers were trodden upon with maternal emphasis at that moment. Soft eyes looked love into eyes that, alas! only returned preoccupation. There was always room on an engagement card for Paul's name. There was always space in the smallest drawing-room for Paul's person, vast though the latter was. There was—fond mothers conveyed it to him subtly after supper

and champagne—an aching void in more than one maiden heart which was his exact fit.

But Paul was at once too simple and too clever for matron and maid alike : too simple, because he failed to understand the inner meaning of many pleasant things that the guileless fair one said to him ; too clever, because he met the subtle matron with the only arm she feared, a perfect honesty. And when at last he obtained his answer from the coy and hesitating Etta, there was no gossip in London who could put forward a just cause or impediment.

Etta gave him the answer one evening at the house of a mutual friend, where a multitude of guests had assembled ostensibly to hear certain celebrated singers, apparently to whisper recriminations on their entertainer's champagne. It was a dull business—except, indeed, for Paul Howard Alexis. As for the lady—the only lady his honest simple world contained—who shall say ? Inwardly she may have been in trembling, in coy alarm, in breathless, blushing hesitation. Outwardly she was, however, exceedingly composed and self-possessed. She had been as careful as ever for her toilet—as hard to please ; as . . . dare we say snappish with her maids ? The beautiful hair had no one of its aureate threads out of place. The pink of her shell-like cheek was steady, unruffled, fair to behold. Her whole demeanour was admirable in its well-bred repose. Did she love him ? Was it in her power to love any man ? Not the humble chronicler—not any man, perhaps, and but few women—can essay an answer. Suffice it that she accepted him. In exchange for the title he could give her, the position he could assure to her, the wealth he was ready to lavish upon her, and, lastly, let us mention in the effete old-fashioned way the love he bore her—in exchange for these she gave him her hand.

Thus Etta Sydney Bamborough was enabled to throw down her cards at last and win the game she had played so skilfully. The widow of an obscure little Foreign Office clerk, she might have been a baroness, but she put the smaller honour aside and aspired to a prince. Behind the gay smile there must have been a quick and resourceful brain, daring to scheme, intrepid in execution. Within the fair breast there must have been a heart resolute, indomitable, devoid of weak scruple. Mark the last. It is the scruple that keeps the reader and his humble servant from being greater men than they are.

'Yes,' says Etta, allowing Paul to take her perfectly gloved hand in his great steady grasp; 'yes, I have my answer ready.'

They were alone in the plashy solitude of an inner conservatory, between the songs of the great singers. She was half afraid of this strong man, for he had strange ways with him—not uncouth, but unusual and somewhat surprising in a finicking, emotionless generation.

'And what is it?' whispers Paul eagerly. Ah! what fools men are—what fools they always will be.

Etta gave a little nod, looking shamefacedly down at the pattern of her lace fan.

'Is that it?' he asked breathlessly.

The nod was repeated, and Paul Howard Alexis was thereby made the happiest man in England. She half expected him to take her in his arms, despite the temporary nature of their solitude. Perhaps she half wished it; for behind her business-like and exceedingly practical appreciation of his wealth there lurked a very feminine curiosity and interest in his feelings—a curiosity somewhat whetted by the manifold differences that existed between him and the society lovers with whom she had hitherto played the pretty game.

But Paul contented himself with raising the gloved fingers to his lips, restrained by a feeling of respect for her which she would not have understood and probably did not merit.

'But,' she said with a sudden smile, 'I take no responsibility. I am not very sure that it will be a success. I can only try to make you happy—goodness knows if I shall succeed.'

'You have only to be yourself to do that,' he answered, with lover-like promptness and a blindness which is the special privilege of those happy fools. She gave a strange little smile.

'But how do I know that our lives will harmonise in the least? I know nothing of your daily existence where you live—where you want to live.'

'I should like to live mostly in Russia,' he answered honestly.

Her expression did not change. It merely fixed itself as one sees the face of a watching cat fix itself, when the longed for mouse shows a whisker.

'Ah!' she said lightly, confident in her own power; 'that will arrange itself later.'

'I am glad I am rich,' said Paul simply, 'because I shall be able to give you all you want. There are many little things that

add to a woman's comfort ; I shall find them out and see that you have them.'

'Are you so very rich, Paul?' she asked with an innocent wonder. 'But I don't think it matters; do you? I do not think that riches have much to do with happiness.'

'No,' he answered. He was not a person with many theories upon life or happiness or such matters—which, by the way, are in no way affected by theories. By taking thought we cannot add a cubit to the height of our happiness. We can only undermine its base by too searching an analysis of that upon which it is built.

So Paul replied 'No,' and took pleasure in looking at her, as any lover must needs have done.

'Except, of course,' she said, 'that one may do good with great riches.'

She gave a little sigh, as if deploring the misfortune that hitherto her own small means had fallen short of the happy point at which one may begin doing good.

'Are you so very rich, Paul?' she repeated, as if she was rather afraid of those riches and mistrusted them.

'Oh, I suppose so. Horribly rich!'

She had withdrawn her hand. She gave it to him again with a pretty movement usually understood to indicate bashfulness.

'It can't be helped,' she said. 'We . . . '—she dwelt upon the word ever so slightly—'we can perhaps do a little good with it.'

Then, suddenly, he blurted out all his wishes on this point—his quixotic aims, the foolish imaginings of a too chivalrous soul. She listened, prettily eager, sweetly compassionate of the sorrows of the peasantry whom he had made the object of his simple pity. Her grey eyes contracted with horror when he told her of the misery with which he was too familiar. Her pretty lips quivered when he told her of little children born only to starve because their mothers were starving. She laid her gloved fingers gently on his when he recounted tales of strong men—good fathers in their simple barbarous way—who were well content that the children should die rather than be saved to pass a miserable existence, without joy, without hope.

She lifted her eyes with admiration to his face when he told her what he hoped to do, what he dreamt of accomplishing. She even made a few eager, heartfelt suggestions, fitly coming from a

woman—touched with a woman's tenderness, lightened by a woman's sympathy and knowledge.

It was in its way a tragedy, the picture we are called to look upon—these newly-made lovers, not talking of themselves, as is the time-honoured habit of such; surrounded by every luxury, both high-born, refined, and wealthy; both educated, both intelligent: he, simple-minded, earnest, quite absorbed in his happiness, because that happiness seemed to fall in so easily with the busier, and, as some say, the nobler, side of his ambition; she, failing to understand his aspirations, thinking only of his wealth.

'But,' she said at length, 'shall you . . . we . . . be allowed to do all this? I thought that such schemes were not encouraged in Russia. It is such a pity to pauperise the people.'

'You cannot pauperise a man who has absolutely nothing,' replied Paul. 'Of course, we shall have difficulties; but, together, I think we shall be able to overcome them.'

Etta smiled sympathetically, and the smile finished up, as it were, with a gleam very like amusement. She had been vouchsafed for a moment a vision of herself in some squalid Russian village, in a hideous Russian-made tweed dress, dispensing the necessaries of life to a people only little raised above the beasts of the field. The vision made her smile, as well it might. In St. Petersburg life might be tolerable for a little in the height of the season—for a few weeks of the brilliant Northern winter—but in no other part of Russia could she dream of dwelling.

They sat and talked of their future as lovers will, knowing as little of it as any of us, building up castles in the air, such edifices as we have all constructed, destined no doubt to the same rapid collapse as some of us have quailed under. Paul, with lamentable honesty, talked almost as much of his stupid peasants as of his beautiful companion, which pleased her not too well. Etta, with a strange persistence, brought the conversation ever back and back to the house in London, the house in St. Petersburg, the great grim castle in the Government of Tver, and the princely rent-roll. And once on the subject of Tver, Paul could scarce be brought to leave it.

'I am going back there,' he said at length.

'When?' she asked with a composure which did infinite credit to her modest reserve. Her love was jealously guarded. It lay too deep to be disturbed by the thought that her lover would leave her soon.

'To-morrow,' was his answer.

She did not speak at once. Should she try the extent of her power over him? Never was lover so chivalrous, so respectful, so sincere. Should she gauge the height of her supremacy? If it proved less powerful than she suspected, she would at all events be credited with a very natural aversion to parting from him.

'Paul,' she said, 'you cannot do that. Not so soon. I cannot let you go.'

He flushed up to the eyes suddenly like a girl. There was a little pause and the colour slowly left his face. Somehow, that pause frightened Etta.

'I am afraid I must go,' he said gravely at length.

'Must?—a prince?'

'It is on that account,' he replied.

'Then I am to conclude that you are more devoted to your peasants than to . . . me?'

He assured her to the contrary. She tried once again, but nothing could move him from his decision. Etta was perhaps a small-minded person, and as such failed to attach due importance to this proof that her power over him was limited. It ceased, in fact, to exist as soon as it touched that strong sense of duty which is to be found in many men and in remarkably few women.

It almost seemed as if the abrupt departure of her lover was in some sense a relief to Etta Sydney Bamborough. For while he, loverlike, was grave and earnest during the small remainder of the evening, she continued to be sprightly and gay. The last he saw of her was her smiling face at the window as her carriage drove away.

Arrived at the little house in Upper Brook Street, Maggie and Etta went into the drawing-room, where biscuits and wine were set out. Their maids came and took their cloaks away, leaving them alone.

'Paul and I are engaged,' said Etta suddenly. She was picking the withered flowers from her dress and throwing them carelessly on the table.

Maggie was standing with her back to her, with her two hands on the mantelpiece. She was about to turn round when she caught sight of her own face in the mirror, and that which she saw there made her change her intention.

'I am not surprised,' she said in an even voice, standing like a statue. 'I congratulate you. I think he is . . . nice.'

'You also think he is too good for me,' said Etta with a little laugh. There was something in that laugh—a ring of wounded vanity, the wounded vanity of a bad woman who is in the presence of her superior.

'No!' answered Maggie slowly, tracing the vein of the marble across the mantelpiece. 'No—o, not that.'

Etta looked up at her. It was rather singular that she did not ask what Maggie did think. Perhaps she was afraid of a certain British honesty which characterised the girl's thought and speech. Instead she rose and indulged in a yawn which may have been counterfeit, but it was a good counterfeit.

'Will you have a biscuit?' she said.

'No, thanks.'

'Then shall we go to bed?'

'Yes.'

CHAPTER IX.

THE PRINCE.

THE village of Osterno, lying, or rather scrambling, along the banks of the river Oster, is at no time an exhilarating spot. It is a large village, numbering over nine hundred souls, as the board affixed to its first house testifieth in incomprehensible Russian figures.

A 'soul,' be it known, is a different object in the land of the Tsars to that vague protoplasm about which our young persons think such mighty thoughts, our old men write such famous big books. A soul is in fact a man—in Russia the women have not yet begun to seek their rights and lose their privileges. A man is therefore a 'soul' in Russia, and as such enjoys the doubtful privilege of contributing to the land tax and to every other tax. In compensation for the first-named impost he is apportioned his share of the common land of the village, and by the cultivation of this ekes out an existence which would be valueless if he were a teetotaller. It is melancholy to have to record this fact in the pages of a respectable volume like the present; but facts—as the orator who deals in fiction is ever ready to announce—facts cannot be ignored. And any man who has lived in Russia, has dabbled in Russian humanity and noted the singular unattractiveness of Russian life—any such man can scarcely deny the fact that if one

deprives the moujik of his privilege of getting gloriously and frequently intoxicated, one takes away from that same moujik the one happiness of his existence.

That the Russian peasant is by nature one of the cheeriest, the noisiest, and lightest-hearted of men is only another proof of the Creator's power; for this dimly-lighted 'soul' has nothing to cheer him on his forlorn way but the memory of the last indulgence in strong drink and the hope of more to come. He is harassed by a ruthless tax-collector; he is shut off from the world by enormous distances over impracticable roads. When the famine comes, and come it assuredly will, the moujik has no alternative but to stay where he is and starve. Since Alexander II. of philanthropic memory made the Russian serf a free man, the blessings of freedom have been found to resolve themselves chiefly into a perfect liberty to die of starvation, of cold, or of dire disease. When he was a serf this man was of some small value to someone; now he is of no consequence to anyone whatsoever except himself, and, with considerable intelligence, he sets but small store upon his own existence. Freedom, in fact, came to him before he was ready for it; and, hampered as he has been by petty departmental tyranny, Governmental neglect, and a natural stupidity, he has made but very small progress towards a mental independence. All that he has learnt to do is to hate his tyrants. When famine urges him, he goes blindly, helplessly, dumbly, and tries to take by force that which is denied by force.

With us in England the poor man raises up his voice and cries aloud when he wants something. He always wants something—never work, by the way—and therefore his voice pervades the atmosphere. He has his evening newspaper, which is dear at the moderate sum of a halfpenny. He has his professional organisers, and his Trafalgar Square. He even has his members of Parliament. He does no work, and he does not starve. In his generation the poor man thinks himself wise. In Russia, however, things are managed differently. The poor man is under the heel of the rich. Someday there will be in Russia a Terror, but not yet. Someday the moujik will erect unto himself a rough sort of guillotine, but not in our day. Perhaps some of us who are young men now may dimly read in our dotage of a great upheaval beside which the Terror of France will be tame and uneventful. Who can tell? When a country begins to grow, its mental development is often startlingly rapid.

But we have to do with Russia of to-day, and the village of Osterno in the Government of Tver. Not a 'famine' Government, mind you! For these are the Volga Provinces—Samara, Pensa, Voronish, Vintka, and a dozen others. No! Tver the civilised, the prosperous, the manufacturing centre.

Osterno is built of wood. Should it once fairly catch alight in a high wind, all that will be left of this town will be a few charred timbers and some dazed human beings. The inhabitants know their own danger, and endeavour to meet it in their fatalistic manner. Each village has its fire organisation. Each 'soul' has his appointed place, his appointed duty, and his special contribution—be it bucket or rope or ladder—to bring to the conflagration. But no one ever dreams of being sober and vigilant at the right time; so the organisation, like many larger such, is a broken reed.

The street, bounded on either side by low wooden houses, is, singularly enough, well paved: this, the traveller is told, by the tyrant Prince Pavlo, who made the road because he did not like driving over ruts and through puddles—the usual Russian rural thoroughfare. Not because Prince Pavlo wanted to give the peasants work, not because he wanted to save them from starvation—not at all, although in the gratification of his own whim he happened to render those trifling services; but merely because he was a great 'bárin'—a prince who could have anything he desired. Had not the other 'bárin'—Steinmetz by name—superintended the work? Steinmetz he hated, the loathed, the tool of the tyrant whom they never see. Ask the 'Starost'—the mayor of the village. He knows the bárin, and hates them.

Michael Roon, the Starosta, or elder of Osterno, president of the Mir or village council, principal shopkeeper, mayor and only intelligent soul of the nine hundred, probably had Tartar blood in his veins. To this strain may be attributed the narrow Tartar face, the keen black eyes, the short spare figure which many remember to this day, although Michael Roon has been dead these many years.

Removed far above the majority of his fellow villagers in intelligence and energy, this man administered the law of his own will to his colleagues on the village council.

It was late in the autumn, one evening remembered by many for its death-roll, that the Starosta was standing at the door of his small shop. He was apparently idle. He never sold vodka,

and the majority of the villagers were in one of the three thriving 'kabaks' which drove a famous trade in strong drink and weak tea. It was a very hot evening. The sun had set in a pink haze which was now turning to an unhealthy grey, and spreading over the face of the western sky like the shadow of death across the human countenance.

The Starosta shook his head forebodingly. It was cholera weather. Cholera had come to Osterno. Had come, the Starosta thought, to stay. It had settled down in Osterno, and nothing but the winter frosts would kill it, when hunger-typhus would undoubtedly succeed it.

Therefore the Starosta shook his head at the sunset, and forgot to regret the badness of the times from a commercial point of view. He had done all he could. He had notified to the Zemstvo the condition of his village. He had made the usual appeal for help, which had been forwarded in the usual way to Tver, where it had apparently been received with the usual philosophic silence.

But Michael Roon had also telegraphed to Karl Steinmetz, and since the despatch of this message the Starosta had dropped into the habit of standing at his doorway in the evening, with his hands clasped behind his back and his beady black eyes bent westward along the Prince's high-road.

On the particular evening with which we have to do the beady eyes looked not in vain; for presently far along the road appeared a black speck like an insect crawling over the face of a map.

'Ah!' said the Starosta. 'Ah! he never fails.'

Presently a neighbour dropped in to buy some of the dried leaf which the Starosta, honest tradesman, called tea. He found the purveyor of Cathay's produce at the door.

'Ah!' he said in a voice thick with vodka. 'You see something on the road?'

'Yes.'

'A cart?'

'No, a carriage. It moves too quickly.'

A strange expression came over the peasant's face, at no time a pleasing physiognomy. The bloodshot eyes flared up suddenly like a smouldering flame in brown paper. The unsteady drink-sodden lips twitched. The man threw up his shaggy head, upon which hair and beard mingled in unkempt confusion. He glared along the road with eyes and face aglow with a sullen, beastlike hatred.

'A carriage! Then it is for the castle.'

'Possibly,' answered the Starosta.

'The Prince—curse him, curse his mother's soul, curse his wife's offspring!'

'Yes,' said the Starosta quietly. 'Yes, curse him and all his works. What is it you want, little father—tea?'

He turned into the shop and served his customer, duly inscribing the debt among others in a rough cheap book.

The word soon spread that a carriage was coming along the road from Tver. All the villagers came to the doors of their dilapidated wooden huts. Even the kabaks were emptied for a time. As the vehicle approached it became apparent that the horses were going at a great pace; not only was the loose horse galloping but also the pair in the shafts. The carriage was an open one, an ordinary North Russian travelling carriage, not unlike the vehicle we call the victoria set on high wheels.

Beside the driver on the box sat another servant. In the open carriage sat one man only, Karl Steinmetz.

As he passed through the village a murmur of many voices followed him, not quite drowned by the rattle of his wheels, the clatter of the horses' feet. The murmur was a curse. Karl Steinmetz heard it distinctly. It made him smile with a queer expression beneath his great grey moustache.

The Starosta standing in his doorway saw the smile. He raised his voice with his neighbours and cursed. As Steinmetz passed him he gave a little jerk of the head towards the castle. The jerk of the head might have been due to an inequality of the road, but it might also convey an appointment. The keen, haggard face of Michael Roon showed no sign of mutual understanding. And the carriage rattled on through the stricken village.

Two hours later, when it was quite dark, a closed carriage, with two bright lamps flaring into the night, passed through the village towards the castle at a gallop.

'It is the Prince,' the peasants said, crouching in their low doorways. 'It is the Prince. We know his bells—they are of silver—and we shall starve during the winter. Curse him—curse him!'

They raised their heads and listened to the galloping feet with the patient, dumb despair which is the curse of the Slavonic race. Some of them crept to their doors, and looking up saw

that the castle windows were ablaze with light. If Paul Howard Alexis was a plain English gentleman in London, he was also a great prince in his country, keeping up a princely state, enjoying the gilded solitude that belongs to the high-born. His English education had inculcated a strict sense of discipline, and as in England, and, indeed, all through his life, so in Russia did he attempt to do his duty.

The carriage rattled up to the brilliantly-lighted door, which stood open, and within, on either side of the broad entrance-hall, the servants stood to welcome their master. A strange, picturesque, motley crew: the major-domo, in his black coat, and beside him the other house-servants—tall, upright fellows, in their bright livery. Beyond them the stable-men and keepers, a little army, in red cloth tunics, with wide trousers tucked into high boots, all holding their fur caps in their hands, standing stiffly at attention, clean, honest, and not too intelligent.

The castle of Osterno is built on the lines of many Russian country seats, and not a few palaces in Moscow. The Royal Palace in the Kremlin is an example. A broad entrance-hall, at the back of which a staircase as broad stretches up to a gallery, around which the dwelling-rooms are situated. At the head of the staircase, directly facing the entrance-hall, high folding doors disclose the drawing-room, which is almost a throne-room. All gorgeous, lofty, spacious, as only Russian houses are. Truly this northern empire, this great white land, is a country in which it is good to be an emperor, a prince, a noble, but not a poor man.

Paul passed through the ranks of his retainers, himself a head taller than the tallest footman, a few inches broader than the sturdiest keeper. He acknowledged the low bows by a quick nod, and passed up the staircase. Steinmetz—in evening dress, wearing the insignia of one or two orders which he had won in the more active days of his earlier diplomatic life—was waiting for him at the head of the stairs.

The two men bowed gravely to each other. Steinmetz threw open the door of the great room and stood aside. The Prince passed on, and the German followed him, each playing his part gravely, as men in high places are called to do. When the door was closed behind them and they were alone, there was no relaxation, no smile of covert derision. These men knew the Russian character thoroughly. There is, be it known, no more impressionable man on the face of God's earth. Paul and Stein-

metz had played their parts so long that these came to be natural to them as soon as they passed the Volga. We are all so in a minor degree. In each house, to each of our friends, we are unconsciously different in some particular. One man holds us in awe, and we unconsciously instil that feeling. Another considers us a buffoon, and, lo! we are exceedingly funny.

Paul and Steinmetz knew that the people around them in Osterno were somewhat like the dumb and driven beast. These peasants required overawing by a careful display of pomp—an unrelaxed dignity. The line of demarcation between the noble and the peasant is so marked in the land of the Czar that it is difficult for Englishmen to realise or believe it. It is like the line that is drawn between us and our dogs. If we suppose it possible that dogs could be taught to act and think for themselves, if we take such a development as practicable, and consider the possibilities of social upheaval lying behind such an education, we can in a minute degree realise the problem which Prince Pavlo Alexis and all his fellow nobles will be called upon to solve within the lifetime of men already born.

(To be continued.)

THE RIDE TO YORK.

WHEN in the bar-parlour of the tavern opposite the Insolvent Court 'the mottled-faced man' called for a song, and, after a stormy altercation, Mr. Samuel Weller, on the principle of 'anythin' for a quiet life, as the man said wen he took the sitivation at the lighthouse,' was induced to oblige, he selected the ballad of Bold Turpin and the Bishop. The song is neither better nor worse than those of the ordinary broad-sheets of the period, but it is interesting as an indication of the fame of its hero. Popularly Turpin holds a place in the annals of 'the road' similar—*longo intervallo*—to that held by Nelson amongst our seamen and Shakespeare amongst our poets. Popularly, but not historically; for, despite the oak-tree on the Northern road whose trunk was riddled with the pistol-balls of travellers who knew Turpin's favourite trysting-place, despite the yew-tree in Epping Forest which served him as the Boscobel oak served King Charles, and despite the kiss he levied on the beautiful Mrs. Fountain in Marylebone Gardens—a study of Turpin literature, which occupies three pages of the British Museum catalogue, produces the depressing conviction that the 'Prince of Highwaymen' was but a sordid hero, with less gallantry in his whole body than danced in the riding-boots of that gay Frenchman Claude du Val, whose curious epitaph in the old church of St. Paul in Covent Garden recorded how

all

Men made he stand, and women made he fall;

and less romance than fluttered in the ribbons of 'Sixteen-string' Jack, erstwhile coachman to my lord Sandwich.

The fact is, that had it not been for the ride to York Turpin's reputation would never have eclipsed that of his jovial companion Matthew King, who owes such reputation as attaches to him mainly to his having been shot by his more notorious confederate in that struggle in 'Red Lion' Street which has been made to serve as so picturesque a starting-point for the famous gallop. 'Rookwood,' however, and the circus tan, to say nothing of the Stygian Library of Penny Dreadfuls, have done their work, and the ride to York remains as much a possession of the people as

any other mythical event in their history since the mediæval minstrels shaped their noble legend of that earlier ride of the Lady Godiva amidst the fantastic gables of ancient Coventry.

Of course, it is manifest at the outset that anyone who attempts to disprove a tradition will find himself in the appalling predicament of having to prove a negative. It matters nothing that all other horses since Bucephalus might have failed where 'Black Bess' is supposed to have succeeded—there remains always that irreducible minimum, the exception which proves the rule; and consequently it becomes of the first importance, in one of those euphonious phrases which Americans mistake for English, to 'locate the quadruped.' It would be interesting to know if Ainsworth invented the mare outright, or if, as in the case of 'the ride,' he merely borrowed her ready-made. There seems to be no mention of her previous to the publication of 'Rookwood' in 1834; and even the authors of those subsequent Grub Street biographies, which increase in quantity as they decrease in quality, and become more circumstantial on less authority, appear hardly to have taken her seriously, since they omit any mention of her from their versions of the ride; whilst the notices of her owner's career, published immediately after his execution on April 7, 1739, which contain probably all that is reliable concerning his exploits, seem to suggest that he never had a mount with which he was completely satisfied. No doubt Turpin, who was far more successful as a horse-thief than on the road, and who, as you may read in the account of his trial 'taken down by Mr. Thomas Kyll, Professor of Shorthand,' was eventually hanged, not for stopping coaches, but for lifting 'a black mare, blind of the near eye,' and a gelding, from Heckington Common, possessed, at one time or another, quite a stud of black mares. Not one of them, however, answers to the description of 'Bonny Black Bess,' whereas we hear of him, to give only a few instances, now in illegal ownership of the 'celebrated racehorse White Stockings,' now escaping from Epping Forest, after the murder of Mr. Thompson's servant, on 'a black horse which he took out of a close,' and now transferring saddle and bridle to a 'fine chestnut mare.' In fact, he seems to have been less fortunate in his mounts than his successor, Hawkes, the 'Flying Highwayman,' the renown of whose mare once brought Lord Coleraine to Newgate with a view to effecting a purchase, on which occasion the prisoner drew his lordship mysteriously aside, and whispered in his ear, 'The

mare won't suit you, perhaps, if you want her for "the road." It's not every man that can get her up to a carriage.' But that, as Mr. Kipling says, 'is another story.'

Even, however, if evidence of Black Bess's existence could be won from the chap-books and broad-sheets of the past, the difficulty of physical endurance would remain. Turpin, it is said, rode from London to York in twelve hours, and any attempt to modify the details can only succeed in proving too much or too little: too much if the hours are increased at the expense of the miraculous, too little if the miraculous is retained at the expense of the hours. Ainsworth, who was an historical novelist, and, as such, untrammelled by history, declared unhesitatingly in favour of the incredible; Grub Street, which hoped it was historical when it was merely illogical, spoiled a fine romance by a half-hearted compromise with probability. Ainsworth, with the touch of the artist, kills 'Black Bess' within sound of the bells of York; Grub Street, with one eye on tradition, 'beds down' its unnamed horse safely in the stable of its inn, and carries the intrepid highwayman, where his forerunner had preceded him, to the Bowling Green of the town, to inquire the time o' day, with the result that when, hours later, the pursuit reached the place and swore copiously to the identity both of the man and the horse, the York bench dismissed the case, and declared that the *alibi* was complete. And so the famous race ended, to the signal discomfiture of the law—'a race,' in the unrivalled diction of the biographer, 'that equalled, if not surpassed, the finest achievements of turf velocity.'

Most people will be of opinion that there is no necessity for any qualification whatever, that it was a case of Turpin first and 'turf velocity' nowhere. It happens, however, that we are in possession of evidence which makes some comparison possible. In 1831 George Osbaldeston rode two hundred miles in seven hours ten minutes and four seconds. He rode, however, not on the road but on the four-mile course at Newmarket; he was allowed one hour twenty-two minutes and fifty-six seconds for stoppages, and he merely used twenty-eight horses. Almost a century earlier Cooper Thornhill rode two hundred and thirteen miles on the turnpike road, between Stilton and London, in twenty-six minutes and fourteen seconds under twelve hours; but he, again, required nineteen horses. It is true that neither of these gentlemen appears to have sponged his horses down with

brandy, to have refreshed them with ale, or even to have wrapped raw steaks round their bits ; but then, neither did they call upon them to clear turnpike gates, which are not as other gates are, or to take apple-carts in their stride. Finally, it must be remembered that before Macadam was Turpin is, and that in his day the King's highway was little if any better than a modern country lane. To this day you may see in parts of Yorkshire the paved tracks laid down to prevent the pack-horses from foundering in the mud and ruts, which, if not exactly 'as deep as a well or as wide as a church door,' were quite sufficient to serve.

Macaulay once declared that 'the ride' had been fathered on every popular highwayman in turn ; any way, the tradition was in existence a generation before Turpin's day. The original 'Black Bess' seems to have been 'a blood bay,' and the rider that famous North-country robber John Nevison, who, in recognition of the achievement, is declared to have received, from no less exalted a person than King Charles, a free pardon and the appellation of 'Swift Nick.' Nevison, in his own day, was a much more redoubtable rascal than ever Turpin in his. He is declared to have indulged, even more freely than his fellows, in that peculiar highway virtue of charity at the expense of the rich ; and we are assured that his manner with ladies was most persuasive. His operations seem to have been carried on on a grand scale, and he is said to have levied toll on the Yorkshire drovers in return for protection against his own cloth. At all events, there is no evidence of his ever having stooped to such pettifoggish thefts as the silver sucking-bottle which Du Val took from the baby on Blackheath, or the serving-wench's purse which caused a quarrel between Turpin and King. Two feats are specially recorded of him—the leap over the sunken road in the rock at Ferrybridge and the ride to York. The story of the latter is told by Defoe, in his 'Tour through the whole of Great Britain,' and his version is probably as true as another.

At four o'clock one morning Nevison robbed a gentleman on the slope of Gad's Hill, and then, suddenly seized with the idea of establishing an *alibi* by a desperate ride, clattered away down the hill to Gravesend. He lost a full hour in securing a passage over the river, but once across he rode up the stream to Tilbury, and then, swinging inland, dashed away north to Chelmsford. In that town he baited his horse for half an hour, and gave him some balls ; then he swung himself once more into the saddle, and

settled down to his long gallop over the flat country to Cambridge. He passed through the University city without drawing rein, and, keeping to the lanes, came at last by Fenny Stanton and Godmanchester into Huntington. There he rested for another half-hour, baiting his horse and himself indulging in a nap; and then once more into the saddle and away, sailing between the hedges and cantering over the moors, until late in the summer evening he saw the mighty cathedral towering above the walls of York. Seven o'clock had struck as he rode in through the gate, but his first thought was for his horse. Having seen him groomed, and changed his own dusty riding apparel, he sauntered down to the Bowling Green. He laid a small wager with the Mayor, and asked his Worship the time o' day: it was a quarter before eight. Of course he was arrested for the robbery; of course he called the Mayor as a witness; and of course he was acquitted.

The ride is probably quite as apocryphal as that of Turpin, but it has at least the right of priority. Ainsworth took it and weaved it into 'Rookwood,' and so gave new life to the legend. In *L'Envoy* to the novel, forestalling the criticisms which he saw were inevitable, he declared he had made his highwayman such as, from tradition and history, he believed him to have been, which only proved he was particularly ignorant of his subject. Mr. Richard Turpin of history, ex-butcher, sometime poacher, house-breaker, sheep-stealer, and horse-thief, who seated an ancient crone on her own fire and robbed youthful serving-wenchs of their purses, is a very different person to the romantic Mr. Turpin of 'Rookwood.' Ainsworth's account of the ride is necessarily pure fiction, but it is not so easy to understand why, except on the supposition of ignorance, he who professed to portray Turpin as in the flesh should have garbled the common facts of his career. Thus Turpin was born, not at Thacksted, but at Hempstead: '1705. Sept. 21. Richardus filius Johannis et Mariæ Turpin,' is the entry in the parish register. As for the shooting of 'Tom' King, it took place, not at Kilburn, but in Whitechapel, as a reference to the newspapers of the day—'Gentleman's Magazine,' 1737—will show. The Kings, again, appear to have been a comprehensively criminal family, with a determined Tyburn bias, and a Mr. Tom King drove up 'Heavy Hill' in 1755; but all the same, as the papers again prove, the King shot by Turpin was called Matthew, and his brother, who was present on the occasion, was Robert. Nor did Turpin gallop away after the fatal shot to

York. He fled, as King, with a curse at him for a 'coward,' told the 'runners' he would, to a deserted mansion in Essex, and then to the cave in Epping Forest, which Ainsworth says he had then ceased to occupy, whence he was at last unearthed (as you may read in 'The London Magazine,' 1737) by Mr. Ives, the King's huntsman, with the help of 'two dry-footed hounds.' After that he certainly did come to York, though not on the back of 'Black Bess,' but as a criminal escaping, under the *alias* of Palmer, from custody for horse-stealing in Lincolnshire. It may seem captious to convict Ainsworth of these inaccuracies; but the question is, why, if he allowed himself poet's licence with regard to every other event in his hero's career, should the ride to York be considered an exception?

Mr. Appleton, clerk of the peace in Beverley (where Turpin was removed for safe custody after his arrest for that senseless shot at his neighbour's game-cock at Brough), who worked up much of the case against him, has left us a precise account—published in 1739, at the shop of Ward & Chandler, without Temple Bar—of these years of the highwayman's life; but in it, though there is enough of horses and to spare, there is not a word of 'Black Bess' or the ride. The London papers for, and previous to, 1739 contain full particulars of his exploits, trial, and execution, not to speak of the exhumation of his body by the doctors, its recapture by the mob, its progress, naked on a shutter, through the streets of York, and its second burial 'in black lime' in the desecrated churchyard of St. George, but they have never an allusion to the ride. One of them, indeed—'The London Magazine'—goes so far as to apologise 'for troubling the publick with any account of so mean and stupid a wretch.' The best and most reliable biography we possess of him, that prefixed to 'Professor' Kyll's report of his trial, never even hints at it. Most striking of all, the confession he made to the 'topsman,' which was printed immediately after the execution, makes no claim whatever to the achievement. In short, the eighteenth century seems never to have heard of it.

In 1819 Caulfield published his 'Portraits of Remarkable Characters,' and in it, with an engraving of the robber seated in his cave with a gun between his knees, is a long reprint of Turpin's career, again without a mention of the ride. The next version, in the Museum, is that published in Glasgow in 1835, and in it the silence is still maintained. We are now within four

years of the centenary of his execution, and the reticence of the biographers is fast becoming ominous; but in the May of the previous year 'a strange thing had happened'—Ainsworth had published 'Rookwood,' and the ride was rapidly becoming history. The effect was as sure as it was sudden. In 1836 *Pickwick* appeared, and in it Mr. Weller's song commencing—

'Bold Turpin vunce, on Hounslow Heath
His bold mare Bess bestrode-er.'

From that moment there was no hesitation. Grub Street had discovered it must look to its pockets; for how should the gutter patronise history which was less seductive than fiction. It solved the riddle by going one better. Version followed version, conceived alike in 'the 'Ercles vein,' in which the bold rider galloped through common sense to the substantiation of an *alibi* that would have staggered even that obese Jehu, Mr. Tony Weller.

Such appears to be all that is discoverable concerning that great achievement, the noise whereof spread over Merry England, in the days when 'Old Rowley' was King by the grace of God, and is still very far from hushed. On the whole, one may hazard the opinion that, in forcing the grim spectre of John Nevison to stand and deliver his laurels, Ainsworth performed a more wonderful feat than was ever accomplished by his own hero. Truly the pen is greater than the sword.

COLLECTING ANCESTORS.

MAN has been defined as 'a collecting animal.' The definition goes far. It notes the fact that man has an eye to the past, a regard, respect, reverence, for antiquity and things ancient. It notes the fact that man has an eye to the present, to beauty, comparison, exhaustive illustration, acquisition. It notes the fact that man has an eye to the future, desires to build up an interest that may grow as he grows, to send down something that bears the impress of his own handiwork. And it notes the fact that each man has his individuality, his idiosyncrasy, his taste, his hobby.

No doubt these characteristics often lie dormant in men, not at times only but throughout their lives. Still, they are there, though dormant. And they are, as a class, distinctive of the man as compared with other animals. The bower-bird—not that a bird is an animal—decking its garden and walking about in it with its tail spread, comes nearer to man than most things do which are not man. The squirrel storing nuts for the winter is a collecting animal. But these are only examples of the working of two universal laws, from which no living thing is free, the instinct of preserving life and the instinct of perpetuating life.

A collecting animal! What a delight it is to be able to fulfil in one's own person this definition; to have the knowledge, and to have the money. If careful search were made by some favourable inquirer, it might perhaps be found that to be a collector, to collect, calls into play some of the highest and noblest feelings of which man is capable. It certainly calls into play some of the worst. We must draw, of course, a clear and broad line between calling into play an unworthy feeling and inducing the man to give way to it. Many a collector has been tempted by the opportunity of acquiring a treasure from some ignorant person, at a twentieth part of its value, to the great loss of the owner; and some have overcome the temptation. Some haven't. Many a collector has been tempted to delay the return of a specimen or a book or a photograph, in the idea—carefully concealed from himself—that the owner and he will forget all about it, or one of them will die, or in some other way it will become a part of his own collection. The knowledge of most of us is adverse to the view

that collectors always—or shall we say generally?—overcome this curious temptation. Many a collector has been tempted to dig up by the roots and carry away the only specimen he can find of some rare plant. Let botanists and tourists look into their hearts and their other receptacles, and blush.

But collecting ancestors is a different kind of thing from collecting china, or coins, or ivories, or ferns. You cannot buy them, dear or cheap; you cannot steal them; you cannot dig them up and dry them. Of course, in a sense you can buy them; that is, you can buy a picture of 'a gentleman in half-armour,' and, having ascertained the period represented by the dress, you can paint a name and a date upon it. It is also, in a sense, possible to steal them: in the sense, that is, of taking what is not your own. But you cannot take them away from the people to whom they belong; for one of the charms of an ancestor is that he can belong to a great many people, and half a dozen more make no practical difference. It is no robbery of Lord Spencer to claim kinship with the departed glories of burnt Cowdray and drowned Montacute. It is less clear that there is a sense in which you can dig them up and dry them. It is only in metaphor that you talk of unearthing an ancestor; and a dry old hunk is the mere abuse of a deservedly disappointed heir.

Landscape gardeners tell you there are two ways of making a weeping ash. One is to graft buds of weepers at the crown of an ordinary stem. The other is to plant a sapling upside down, branches in the ground, roots in the air. If you examine some very large specimens, you will see reason to think that the latter course has been adopted. So, in producing a genealogical tree, you may proceed on either of two methods. You can begin at the top, or you can begin at the bottom. The one gives you a fan-shaped tree hung from the tassel of the fan; the other gives you the fan as a woman holds it. The woman is always right in these days.

Beginning then at the bottom, that is, at yourself, it is clear that above your own name come two others. Above each of those two others, and so on. In four generations, counting yourself as one, there stand above you eight names, and of these, in ordinary course, only one is your own name. What are the others? Where did the eight people live? Who were their forbears? Of course, if you are a great person you have the answer at once; it is emblazoned at the Heralds' College; it is recorded on the pages of

the history of England or of Scotland; you have it constructively or actually in the Peerages, the County Families, the Landed Gentry; you can draw it all out when you please. But there are a great many people, and not such very small people either, who can by no means tell you very straight off all the eight names and all about them; there are a great many more who are lucky if as much as one of the eight is found in those interesting volumes; there are a vast multitude who have not even that assistance towards collecting their ancestors. If persons belonging to any of these three classes desire to collect, in any one of the eight branches which does not link on to lines in printed books, there is only one way to do it. They must go to the parish registers. After that, if they have been fortunate, they have plenty of other places to go to, probate offices, and so on; but our present concern is with the first step, the parish registers.

Behold, then, a collector of ancestors, who knows all about his wife's eight names and a good deal about some of his own eight, going forth to investigate the earlier origin of a relative so near as his mother's father. That gentleman was not a young man, was rather elderly, when the collector's mother was born, and she was born in 1801. His birth may have taken place about 1750. A reference to a directory of the cathedral city in which he lived, dated 1825, showed that he was sub-chanter of the cathedral church, rector of Thursdaythorpe in the Wolds, vicar of St. Mary Priesthill Junior in the city, and curate of Appleton, four miles up the river. The 'Maier and Jurats' of New Romney once applied to the Archbishop of Canterbury to send them 'a nimble curate in full orders'; and on January 31, 1664, they remonstrated with their non-resident vicar for having left them wholly destitute since Christmas last, up to which time they had enjoyed the services of 'a nimble curate who was usually in his sermon and prayer before it about a quarter of an hour.' The collector's grandparent must have been a very nimble curate if he did all his duties at Appleton and elsewhere.

The collector had never had speech of this beneficed gentleman. How much could have been learned in ten minutes' conversation with him, if he had consented to be communicative! He was, as a fact, very reticent. 'We are a fallen family,' was all he would tell his young daughter, who was inquisitive, as young daughters sometimes are—or were. 'We came from Scotland, long ago,' he used to say. And once, talking of some great people

near, he was heard to say, 'Countess! I have a cousin a countess.' Before his death he destroyed his letters and papers; but in a private drawer there had once been seen a miniature of a beautiful young woman, and his daughter imagined that this was the cousin, and that thereby hung a tale. The collector once came by accident on the official record of his appointment as chaplain to the premier Earl of Scotland; but no attainable cousin seemed to lurk in either of the countesses of the said earl.

One thing was quite certain; he himself came from Charbrook, in Westmorland, and his father was a 'statesman,' the owner and worker, that is, of an estate in land. In that beautiful valley of Charbrook, leading up from the left bank of Turnmere to the Kirkliston Pass, his forbears had lived and worked their own land. Could they be traced in the registers? Were their descendants still there? A letter to the vicar settled both questions. They appeared on the first page of the registers, and they and another family were at present the most respected statesmen in the dale. The first page of the registers might not mean very much in the way of antiquity, but the answer was stimulating.

To get to Charbrook village you have, as everyone knows, to go by Stringness, if you go by water, and by Birkthwaite, wrongly called Turnmere, if you go by rail. How the tourist swarms at Stringness, and how bright the shore looks, with its dozens of pleasure boats gaily painted and red-cushioned! And how pretty the white-winged yachts are, bending gracefully beneath the breeze till their jib laps the water. And if you are there on the occasion of a regatta, when the racing yachts are for once brought out from their confinement in safe houses, you do indeed see a beautiful sight. Even the swiftly plying steam yachts are not unpicturesque, from the little cock-boat with a tea-kettle for a boiler, to the great public boats, the *Teal*, and the *Swan*, and the *Tern*, built respectively for three, four, and five hundred people, and on occasion proving that they possess elastic properties. It is not quite sure that the steamer, as etherealised by Mr. Ruskin on the neighbouring Königsee into a glorified gondola, is so very much superior, from an æsthetic point of view, to these Midland Railway boats, with W.S.Y.—supposed to be short for whisky—embroidered on the jerseys of the men. And how well the great crowds on board and on shore conduct themselves, all good temper, and quietness, and propriety. The contrast between this and the Isle of Man is in this respect extreme. There is probably no place in

existence which is so trying to a quiet person as Man in the hands of trippers. A solitary archæologist, sorely afflicted by that visitation, and treated with special contumely by some of the 'softer' sex, thus delivered himself:

It's true, but rather spiteful,
To say, in Mona's isle,
That Man is quite delightful,
But man is very vile.

'What though the spicy breezes
Blow soft o'er Ceylon's isle,
And every prospect pleases,
And only man is vile.'

With fallen man the poet
Reproached that torrid isle;
In Man, he did not know it,
Much more than that is vile.

Fair Mona, far from torrid,
Of tailless things the nurse,
Thy tripping man is horrid,
Thy tripping woman worse.

But pleasant as the lake tourists are, the collector avoided them by resting at the most quiet and restful place on the lake, the Low-moor Hotel, with its private pier a mile short of Waterend, for Kanturside. A pretty walk of a mile, or a mile and a half, over the shoulder of the hill, brings you from Low-moor to Charbrook Dale and village.

At Charbrook Church the Vicar disclosed his treasures, kept still in the old oak chest, with three keys and a partition for each key. It was clear at a glance that the 'first page of the Register' meant a great deal in the way of antiquity, and that extraordinary care had been taken to preserve the venerable relic. The first date visible was 1579. The records had been kept in a paper book, and the earliest pages had become discoloured and worn, almost to the last degree. Some one with knowledge and means had had the worn fragments let into paper sheets, in the skilful manner now carried to so much perfection at the Record Office, and bound in a vellum-covered volume. More than that, the whole of the faded writing had been read, and the registers from 1579 to the time of the modern books had been copied into a fine folio volume in a clear hand. All this good work was due to the leading statesman of the place, whose ancestors, from time immemorial, had been among the principal people there; his name

whether the real name or not does not matter, George Browne. The inlaying of the worn leaves and the vellum binding had been done at Ripon—much to the credit of the Ripon workman. The example set by the village of Charbrook is well worthy of imitation by many greater places.

The ancestors to be collected were Forrests, and the Vicar's communication had said, 'Forrests and Birketts are all the same,' whatever that might mean. Again, it does not matter whether the names are the real names or not. The second entry in the Register, in the year 1579, ran thus: 'George Byrkhead the . . . Byrkhead was baptized the . . .' Then came 'Cuthbert Birkett was buryed the 3d of Aprill.' Then, 'Margrett Birkhead the daughter of Christofer Birkett baptized the . . . of the moneth of Aprill.' Then, 'Catheryne hir sister being her Twynlynge was baptized the same daie'—a pretty word for a twin sister or twin brother. Seven out of the first nine legible entries were of these names. It was clear that Birkett, Birkhead, and Byrkhead, were all one, and that the Birketts take their name from an ancestor who was designated 'o' the Byrk-head,' his home nestling in, or under, some projecting spur of the hill, clothed with birch trees. Any supposed reference to the character of the ancestor as a hard-headed man may be rejected. No Forrests appeared till 1703, when there was an entry, 'Edward, son of John Forrest,' baptized January 23, 1703, meaning, of course, what we should call 1704, the old year ending with March. But in 1647 there was an entry which suggests an interesting question, 'Isabell Ellerey, daughter of George of Orrest.' Everyone knows Orrest and Orrest Head, at the foot of Charbrook Dale, not far from Stringness. Did the name Forrest in those parts come by elision of the opening vowel from the place-designation 'of Orrest'? And was this the last surviving hint of it, mixed up with a permanent surname taken from elsewhere? The Registers gave several examples of place-designations on which surnames might be founded; for instance, 'o' th' Beckside.' Ellerey, or Elleray, is itself a place-designation, so that the entry would mean 'Isabell of Elleray of Orrest,' the family having moved from Elleray to Orrest, or from Orrest to Elleray. 'Price' from 'ap Rhys,' and 'Pritchett' from 'ap Richard,' are patronymics formed on the same principle as 'Forrest' from 'of Orrest.' In a similar manner Saint Liberius has given birth to Saint Oliver, through the form Santo Liverio, and Saint Odo to San Todo, from Sant' Odo.

This John Forrest had to be traced upwards and downwards. Upwards, there was no sign of him; he was clearly an imported person—a foreigner. Downwards, he grew. He married again, his second wife being 'Agnes Fleeming.' Fleming is a common name thereabouts, and the le Flemings have long been great people in those parts. The old Hall of Kirch-Königsburg was their residence for seven generations, on the property which came to them in the time of Henry III. by marriage with the Urswicks. It was not till 1409 that they settled at Tieal, when a marriage with the daughter of Sir John de Lancaster brought to the le Flemings their present lovely domain. The particle *le* was dropped in the next generation; nearly 300 years later the owner had his son christened 'Michael le,' and from that time they have been le Flemings again.

This second marriage of the foreigner John Forrest was in one of the years 1707 to 1715, near the end of that period, the margin with the years being worn away. On May 15, 1743, his son Robert married Agnes Birkett, and Richard, their fourth child, was baptized March 19, 1748. This was the pluralist of 1825, and thus the two names were added which alone were wanted to complete the eight in that generation. The four corresponding names in the previous generation were there too, and, if John could be traced, the eight in the generation beyond were in the books. The leading names, moreover, were there up to the tenth generation, beyond which the registers did not go. The collector had secured from eighteen to twenty ancestors, and search among wives' parents would give more. This was a great haul for one afternoon.

The other treasures of Charbrook Church are the church itself, with a roof very bold for its period, two old collecting boxes of oak, with inscriptions, and a silver chalice with an inscription, shown at Carlisle some years ago, and there seen by the unwitting collector. All of these were found to connect themselves with the search for ancestors. The church was rebuilt in 1736 by George Browne, son of Elizabeth Birkett, who was aunt of Agnes, the pluralist's mother; the pluralist, it was recorded, preached in the church when it was forty years old and he twenty-eight. The collecting boxes were inscribed, '*Remember the poor. W.B. I.C. 1692,*' those initials representing William Birkett and John Cookson. The chalice was inscribed, '*This is the gift of Agnes Burkett y^e daughter of Capton George Burkett given to Charrebrooke*

Church Aprill y^e 28 Anno Dom. 1688. The *is* had been omitted, and was added by the same hand above the line. These four material 'finds' were pieces of luck such as very rarely come in a collector's way.

There remained the most material of the links with Charbrook, the existing members of the two main families. One of the families was soon exhausted; Birketts, as statesmen, there were none. But, of course, everyone knows the 'Mortal Man' of Charbrook, with its old sign, a red-faced man fronting a pale-faced one, and the legend of their dialogue—

'O! Mortal Man, that liv'st on bread,
How comes thy nose to be so red?'
'Thou silly ass, that looks so pale,
It comes of drinking Birkett's ale!'

Forrests had become heirs of the two 'estates' formerly held by Birketts, and a very pleasant visit to the modern statesman the collector had. The two 'tenements,' held from time immemorial by the Byrkheads of the great Barony of Kendal (manor of Turnmere, sub-manor of Charbrook), on service of a man and horse for each, have always been known as Lowfold and Lowhouse respectively. Lowfold came first to the Forrests, Robert having been admitted to possession in 1743, in right of Agnes his wife, heiress of her brother, who died *sine prole* in 1739. It is now let out to cottagers, the two farms being worked as one, and most of the windows on the ground floor and upper storey have been made up, one end of the house being used for storage. Before these changes it must have been very picturesque, both on the long straight face which looked on the village street, with a particularly fascinating and unusual upper oriel, and also on the court side, where the long house with its gable end, and the barn with a return gable, form with the wall and gate a rectangular enclosure. There is a peep through to a garden with southern-wood; and the balustraded space under the barn roof, at the head of the covered stone stairs, with doors giving access to various lofts, is gay with trailing flowers, like a German *Laube*. Failing a photograph of Lowfold in the shops at Stringness and Kanturside, a view of Highfold may be got, where the buildings are at the back, instead of forming a quadrangle with the front of the house. An oak cupboard let two feet into the wall in one of the rooms of Lowfold, with unusually good carving and pendants, has '1674 C.B.' in the centre of the canopy, and at one end in a circle $\begin{smallmatrix} C \\ A \quad B \end{smallmatrix}$, that is, Christopher Birkett and

Anne, his wife, daughter of Edward Turner, of Kendal, who were married September 5, 1657, the great-great-great grandfather and mother of the collector. This, again, was a very unusual piece of luck. On a slaty stone is inscribed 'R. Forrest annos 18 natus 1820, Jun. 30,' that being the handiwork of a son of Lowfold who became a well-known clergyman in Australia, and returned to die at Kendal and be buried at Charbrook. The 'tenement' of Lowhouse came to the Forrests a generation later than Lowfold, by marriage with another Agnes Birkett. The present Lowhouse is a much more modern house than Lowfold, probably a hundred years later. It has on a gable 'W.B. M.B. 1627,' William Birkett and Mary his wife, father and mother of Christopher, of Lowfold. But by a very unusual instance of spaciousness, William and his wife left standing within the large enclosure of their court-yard the old house which they quitted when they moved to the new house in 1627. It was kept up as a second family house for a considerable time, and tradition says that 'Capton George Burkett' lived here, whose daughter Agnes gave the chalice in 1688. It is the oldest house in the district, and dates at least from Edward IV.'s time. An etching of it was published early in the present century in the *Beauties of the Lake Scenery*, and it is the most photographed house in all the dale. A walk round it shows a much larger place than the photograph indicates.

A fine tall statesman, sitting in an ancient chair in the home of his ancestors, talking of the old people and the old times, is a very pleasant sight to see. The pleasure is greatly enhanced, to the mind of the visitor from a distant city, by the sense that the old times and the old people belong to him too. There were a few excellent bits of old blue china, and two great circular Leeds dishes with the feathered edge, exactly like two great Warburton dishes which the collector in his china days rescued from Nuremberg, but with the projecting rim at the bottom which puts a chasm between Leeds and rare Warburton. In the passage between the entrance and the best room there was a beautiful oak cupboard, let into the wall as at Lowfold, and very skilfully carved, with the date 1634, seven years after the completion of the gable end. Upstairs, the great bedstead was quite a dream of handsome Jacobean pillars and richly sculptured head. It bore in the centre of the head 'G.B. 1654,' presumably 'Capton George.' A beautiful chest on the landing carried in bold relief the legend 'I.B. 1694,' for John Birkett. Latest of all the dated pieces was a plain

chair of black oak, with arms of the Glastonbury type and the initials 'A.B.'—no doubt the Agnes Birkett who became heiress of Lowfold in 1739 and brought it to the Forrests in 1743. A date, '1752,' was marked on the back in different character. A collector must be very grasping who asks for fortune greater than this.

These 'tenements' were two out of the forty-eight customary tenements of the sub-manor of Charbrook. The great barony of Kendal was granted to Ivo Taillebois, and in the course of time it came to be divided into four fees. One of these, which included Charbrook, was called the 'Richmond fee,' because it was granted to Margaret, Countess of Richmond, mother of Henry VII. The tenants held on the tenure of service at 'the western border for anent Scotland.' The Richmond fee is famous as having been the subject of the attempt of James I. and Prince Charles to put an end to tenant-right and take actual possession of the tenants' lands. If they had succeeded we might now have a race of malcontents where all is peace and order. The king's plea was that with the advent of his gracious person to England the boundary was obliterated and there could be no border war. If no border war, then no border service. If no border service, the tenure was bad. Prince Charles filed a bill against the tenants. They subscribed 2,700*l.* and gave it to the Chancellor, Francis Bacon, and he confirmed them in their customary rights. John Forrest, George Browne, and Stephen Birkhead, were among the bondsmen.

The Charbrook statesmen were specially favoured, they and their neighbours at 'Amylside' paying only half and two-thirds the fines paid on change of lord or tenant by other tenants of the Richmond fee. In all tenements of the fee, if daughters are left and no son, the eldest daughter succeeds without subdivision, and this it is that has kept the tenements and the families together. A widow, too, of customary right holds her deceased husband's tenement during chaste widowhood, another means of keeping a family together. In this case, as the border service could not be performed by the tenant in person, the lord took as a heriot the best beast on the holding.

Charbrook, like Amylside, was a forest. The Lady Margaret had to pay out 2*l.* 3*s.* a year to the foresters of Charbrook, and 3*l.* 1*s.* 6*d.* to the bowbearer there. When the 'old park' was disparked it was divided among the tenants, with a special arrangement to give a piece that bore wood to each tenant who had no wood on his holding.

It remained to call on the great storehouse of ancient lore, Mr. George Browne, the king of the dale, as some ladies had described him, the statesman to whom the parish is indebted for the preservation and the copy of the registers. Here indeed was a feast of good things—manor rolls, marriage contracts, volume after volume of letters and drafts of letters bound in order, and, collected on one sheet, the autographs of all the adult males of five generations, from the owner, the fourth George in succession, up to Benjamin Browne, whose marriage with Elizabeth Birkett made the owner and the collector fourth cousins. As to the house, there never was such an oak house. From the entrance hall to the top landing nothing could be seen but oak, old oak: oak clocks, oak chairs, oak chests, oak floors, oak doors, oak cupboards, oak buffets, oak partitions, oak walls, oak staircases. The staircases were particularly engaging, two parallel flights on each story up to a half-way landing, and then a single flight doubling back between them to the actual landing; all standing open and clear, so that from the bottom you saw the double and single flights crossing and recrossing in the air. The splendour of the carving was beyond description, especially in the case of the great bedstead and the cradle, carrying inscriptions and an early date. To the eye of the collector, and perhaps in fact, there was no piece more interesting than the great chair which commemorated the marriage of Benjamin Browne and Elizabeth Birkett, with the appropriate inscriptions—all in relief, of course, though that may be a contradiction in terms—and on the back two shields, one bearing the double-necked eagle displayed, for Browne, and the other the Birkett arms, on a field sable three garbs proper within a bordure or. This house, again, is photographed by everyone. It is called Townend, and the statesman's phloxes are as fine in their way as his oak. Here the collector was shown original letters and deeds and admissions of his ancestors, and was informed that the dashing cavalry general of the Southern States in the war between North and South was grandson of a Forrest who went out to 'Charles Town'; and elsewhere he learned that a well known Australian statesman—in a different sense—was the grandson of another.

'The Forrests came from Kanturside to Charbrook about 1700, and their tradition is that they came originally from Scotland.' So the collector was informed. As Kanturside was for a few days the collector's metropolis, it was a natural thing to inspect the registers there. The mere sight of them is delightful. They

only begin in 1642, but for the first hundred years they were kept on long narrow pieces of parchment, each new piece sewn on to the end of the previous piece when required. They are in three separate rolls, each many yards long, and are written on both sides. The lengths of the pieces vary greatly. In the oldest roll the average length is about a foot, and the longest piece is about 22 inches. In the middle roll the pieces reach 28 and 30 inches in length. The most recent roll consists of pieces about 21 inches long. The breadth is from $4\frac{1}{4}$ to $4\frac{5}{8}$ inches.

John Forrest was soon found. Indeed, there were two. One was born in 1684, too late by a few years for the Charbrook John. He had a sister Agnate, and was son of Edward Forrest of the Nook End and Elen his wife. The other was the right John. He was born or baptized in the closing days of 1659, and was brother of the Edward above. They were sons of Edward Forrest of the Nook End and Margrett his wife. As their oldest son was born in 1651, Edward and Margrett would be born about 1630 at the latest, and it was no use looking further for them in registers which began in 1642.

One of the entries pointed to a tragedy of some kind, for the deaths at the time were far too few for a period of epidemic. Perhaps the tragic circumstances spoiled the parson's grammar: 'May the 11th was Margrett wife of Edward Forrest and Richard his son were buried.' But, indeed, having once begun with a 'was,' the entry would have made Margrett wife of both father and son, without the 'were.'

Another entry pointed towards the Scottish tradition: 'Gawen Forrest was baptized 18 January 1671.' Besides this Gawen, there were in the earlier generations Gawen Birkett and Gawen Reay, and Robert Birkett married Janet Rea in 1682. The spellings are worth the notice of those who are interested either in the name Wray—like the collector—or in the name Reay. Gawen, son of 'Gawen Wrey,' was baptized November 10, 1678; his brother Thomas, son of 'Gawen Reay,' of Brathay, was baptized November 23, 1684. Here we have Rea, Reay, and Wrey for one and the same family. Near Carlisle we find a spelling which combines two of these—Wreay. Again, Low Wray and High Wray and Wray's Castle are well-known places on the banks of Turnmere; and Wraysholme Tower near Cartmel was the fortified keep of the Harringtons, built in the fifteenth century, and forfeited at Bosworth to Henry's stepfather Stanley.

Inquiry showed that the Nook End was still a known place, and to it the collector naturally found his way. The little farmhouse was evidently much older than the earliest of the Register rolls. It is the furthest house on Tial Head, approached by a picturesque road that becomes a footpath at Nook End, leading to the Red Screes. The tenement is no longer the residence of a statesman. It has one roof for a large and lofty kitchen, and another for the stairs. The rest is a long rectangle. The ground floor is all one, with a partition of black panelled oak across it. A panelled door in the middle of the partition leads from the 'house' to the 'parlour,' just as a door leads from the hall to the combination-room in the colleges in Cambridge of the older type. 'Combination-room' is quite modern, and 'the common chamber' is the old phrase—probably because the fire was there, at which all the actual members of the society had a right to warm themselves in common. No early college in Oxford had this arrangement of rooms, the Oxford ground-plans being less like those of the domestic houses of the period. Magnificent Oxford was always more lofty than modest Cambridge. The simple division of the ground-floor at Nook End into 'house' and 'parlour'—or dining-room and withdrawing-room, as they said in later times and larger houses—is the old English plan. The upper story and the stairs were all of oak, as at Townend, but very rough and rude. In none of the four bedrooms could any initials or dates be discovered. Only there was in one of them the very largest oak chest anyone ever set eyes on. The tradition is that it took ten men to get it upstairs. To look at it and at the stairs, one would say it must have been built in the room.

And there at Nook End, looking down on to Tial Water and Mossmere, the collector had to leave the shades of this line of ancestors, in all the mystery of the tradition—still fresh, still held among their descendants—that they were a fallen family and came from Scotland.

Later investigations showed that Lowfold came to the Birkheads by marriage with the heiress, Elizabeth Airey, in 1628. The Ayra's go up to Edward III., when they intermarried with the Gilpins, ancestors of Bernard Gilpin, the Apostle of the North. Lowhouse, the older of the two Lowhouses, was still the home of the Birkheads in 1476, when George, probably son-in-law of Richard Gilpin, was Bailiff of Charbrook. And Robert Forrest of 'Emilsyd' was found getting married in 1589.

LIZA'S LOU.

THEY hailed from Devonshire, both Liza and her Lout. She was a short, sturdy, raw-boned, roley-poley damsel, with a face shining with good-nature and yellow soap. He was a sulky, black-browed, unprepossessing specimen of the Bill Sykes order of humanity, boasting, however, of the highly incongruous Christian name of Arthur, or rather 'Orthur,' to adopt Liza's own pronunciation. With regard to his profession, it was something to do with a cart, though what might have been that cart's particular line of business I am unable, after lapse of time, to denote. It might have been a mud-cart, or a dust ditto; it might equally well have been connected with the coal interest, or have been chartered for the conveyance of building materials, or dabbled in drain-pipes, or taken a hand in paving-stones. All I do know is that the cart used to go ploughing up the middle of the road, with the Lout slouching along at the side, with his hands in his pockets, and a general expression of dogged determination not to take them out unless driven to it.

As to Liza, she was 'a general,' or what in former times was known as a maid-of-all-work. There was no slouching about her, and no half measures. Her invariable method was to go at everything head foremost, and see what came of it—a proceeding that was not without results upon the family porcelain; indeed, 'Liza, her mark,' might have been traced upon most of the household gods.

Still, there was no getting over the fact that she meant well, in spite of the dearth of jug-handles, and the harvest of cracks and mutilations which marked her domestic progress.

'I never see the like,' she would explain tearfully; 'if I only looks at the things they falls down and breaks theirselves.'

She and Orthur had known each other all their lives. If they had not exactly grown in beauty side by side, it was owing to Nature having placed stumbling-blocks in the way when she endowed Liza with a turnip-shaped visage and a turnup nose, at the same time that, having roughly sketched in Orthur's features with a very blunt pencil, she had stamped the design with the most truculent, ready-made scowl she had in stock.

Not that Liza was conscious of there being any room for improvement in his expression. They had been neighbours' children, and she had seen him scowl his way up from boyhood; her own youth having been passed in a galley-slave sort of existence, chained to an oar in the shape of a perpetual baby, while he had slouched and hung about with his hands in his pockets, accepting her homage as his lawful due, at the same time levying tribute—such as the largest bite out of her apple, or the first suck at a bull's-eye—until that day when Liza, having grown up as well as she could, came to London 'to better herself.'

The fact of her success in securing a situation, to which was attached the handsome emolument of 12*l.* per annum, having been wafted on the wings of rumour to distant Devonshire, was responsible for the reappearance of the Lout upon the scene, burning not so much with a desire to 'better' *himself* as to obtain the maximum wages for a modicum of work.

Although it is possible that in this laudable design his luck was—in Liza's opinion, at least—less than his deserts, he nevertheless succeeded in obtaining the nondescript post previously alluded to. Marrying, however, under eighteen shillings a week, was considered inadvisable; the more so as Liza had set her heart on commencing housekeeping on quite an ambitious scale, with no less than four chairs and a set of tea-trays.

To this end she devoted all that could possibly be laid aside from the yearly 12*l.* Orthur, as a superior being requiring beer and baccy *ad lib.*, could not naturally be expected to contribute anything to the fund. It was also requisite that *his* food should be not only ample, but administered at intervals of clockwork regularity; whereas Liza regarded meals more in the light of tiresome interruptions, and dinner, in particular, as a movable feast, or a species of passover to be partaken of standing, with your sleeves tucked up and loins girt in the intervals of blacking grates or cleaning windows.

Still, as far as could be judged, the course of true love, as exemplified in the persons of Liza and her Lout, ran with tolerable smoothness. If the latter was not an ardent wooer, neither was the former an exacting *fiancée*, being quite content when her Sunday out allowed her the privilege of walking by his side, and responding deferentially to such remarks as were growled out once in half a mile or so.

And thus it went on—Liza slaving and saving, and the Lout

gorging and guzzling—until a change came over the scene in consequence of the advent of a third person. This was none other than a younger sister of Liza's—name of Looheaser—for whom the former had succeeded in obtaining a situation as nurse-maid.

'Looheaser, she be that sick and tired o' the country, and see a bit o' life she must and will if 'tis ever so.'

So Looheaser, aged seventeen (there were nearly ten years between them and half that number of brothers and sisters), having packed her box and secured the overflowings in a blue-spotted handkerchief, came up to London to see life from behind a perambulator.

She was on a larger scale than Liza—smarter, perter, more highly coloured, and actually sported a fringe. Liza, who had not seen her since she herself left home, was amazed at the metamorphosis.

'Lor, Looheaser,' she exclaimed, 'ow you've gone and growed! Why, Orthur won't never know yer!'

All the same, it was Orthur's opinion, transmitted through the medium of Liza, that 'Looheaser, she'd come on wonderful, and he shouldn't be s'prised if she didn't pick up a young man of 'er own soon.'

Liza chuckled fondly over this specimen of his wit.

'The high dear o' Looheaser, 'er as I uster nuss—and a rare 'eavy child she were, too—a-settin' up sweet'eartin'!'

The elder sister laughed until the tears came into her eyes, and ended by breaking a teacup in honour of the occasion, as though she were toasting Looheaser after the most approved fashion of the last century.

One result of this was that when Sunday came round the original duet became a trio, for, as Liza herself put it, 'Looheaser didn't know nobody, and they couldn't let a gal of 'er age go gaddin' off alone. 'Sides, she'd promised mother, down in Devonshire, to look after Looheaser, and any'ow, Orthur, he didn't mind. 'Deed, he 'ad said as he didn't know but what it didn't make things livelier, and, lor, the way that gal answers 'im back you never 'ear the like. Why,' in mingled admiration and horror, 'she thinks nothink o' contrydictin' 'im to 'is face, she don't, and cheeks 'im, she do, till you'd think he'd get right down mad. And when I ups and tells 'er t'other night as she didn't oughter go on so, he says, "Let 'er be," he says, "and mind my own

bizness, as she's but a gal as'll steady down soon enuff." Well,' with a dubious shake of the head, 'I don't say he ain't right, only I'm 'arf afeared as our Looheaser's a bit flighty.'

Months went by, and, so far from showing any tendency to settle, as had been prognosticated, Looheaser became even more and more daring in her doings, crowning all by the purchase of a hat and feather that almost took away Liza's breath; while Orthur, wiping his mouth appreciatively with the back of his hand, observed that 'that was somethink like, and why couldn't Liza smarten 'erself up a bit more while she was about it?'

'Liza, indeed!' with a toss of the beplumed head, 'a fine guy she'd look in one. No, let her stick to 'er old black bonnet, sich as she (Looheaser) wouldn't bemean 'erself by wearing. It was good enuff for the likes o' 'er.'

Perhaps it was hardly to be wondered at that, now and again, Liza would return from one of these Sunday evening expeditions somewhat dispirited. It was not only Looheaser's dressiness, but her way of jeering at her elder sister before the Lout that the former found rather hard to bear. Once or twice she even got so far in her own mind as to wish that Looheaser had stayed safely down in Devonshire, instead of coming to see life and making an invariable third at those interviews which had once been strictly *tête-à-tête*.

Still, there was balm in Gilead, or rather in the old stocking containing her hard-earned savings, which savings had by this time attained such a high level of prosperity that they were up to the first darn in the leg.

For Liza's ambition had soared above the four chairs and the tea-trays, and now aimed at nothing less than a round table with a shiny top, which was to support a flowerpot and saucer set in the centre of a white crochet mat.

'Looheaser, she crowshays lovely, and I'll get 'er to make me one with fringe all round.'

A *propos* of whom it was remarkable that, in spite of the hat and feather, she had not yet succeeded in picking up a young man of her own—or, if she had, kept him very dark. Liza, having put the question to her plain one day, was somewhat surprised at the outburst of giggles with which it was received.

'Maybe I 'ave and maybe I 'aven't,' was the only answer vouchsafed on pressing the inquiry. 'Lor, Liza, what a goose you be!'

Orthur's behaviour was queer, too, about this time, and occasioned his long-suffering sweetheart many searchings of the heart.

'He be as touchy as a box o' lucifers, and no pleasin' on 'im nohow. Looheaser, she jest larfs in 'is face; but then she's that darin' as I never see the like.'

Altogether, poor Liza was beginning to be much perturbed, or, as she would have expressed it, 'put about.' Vague forebodings filled her mind, and she 'felt for all the world as though some think were goin' to 'appen'—a presentiment that was shortly justified by the breaking of a looking-glass; and the most ignorant person living knows that is about the worst misfortune that could befall anyone. Consequently it was with a delighted astonishment, too great for words, that she, not long after, heard Orthur growl out something to the effect that he'd 'jist 'ad 'is wages riz 'alf a crown a week, and she'd better give notice so as they could be married Easter Monday.'

Liza blushed a light purple, while her ears seemed to stand out on each side of her head as much as to ask, 'Can we believe our own testimony at this unexpected proof of the honourableness of the Lout's intentions?'

'Lor, Orthur, why you never mean it!' she exclaimed bashfully as soon as she recovered speech. 'Whatever's made yer took like that all of a sudden?'

'I wanter get it over,' was the surly reply that made the recipient conscious of a vague sensation as though her innermost feelings had corns and some one had trodden on them.

However, it wore off, and having given the required notice, she set about the pleasing task of getting her 'things' ready. In the exuberance of her emotions it must be admitted that breakages occurred with monotonous regularity; jugs relinquished their spouts almost at sight, and teacups turned Red Republicans in the matter of handles. In fact, Liza's proposed path to the altar might be said to have been strewn with broken crockery.

Excitement culminated on that Sunday when she was to be 'asked in church' for the first time. To be sure she was unable to be present, having her dinner to see to, but Looheaser, whose duties were of a lighter nature, deputed on the occasion, and called in on her way back.

'How did it sound, Looheaser?'

The latter, struggling with mirth that seemed to border on the hysterical, was understood to utter the word 'uncommon.'

Liza's face was one broad grin as she put the further inquiry, Did he give it out bold? Could you 'ear the names plain?'

'Orful plain,' was the answer, culminating in a choke.

'Lor, Looheaser,' slapping her vigorously on the back, 'ow you do take on! Did——did folks stare or seem took aback, like?'

Looheaser couldn't say, but on the whole was inclined to think they took it pretty easy.

'I wish I could a-gone myself,' sighed her sister regretfully. 'I jest should a-liked to 'ave 'eard 'ow it went, though I guess I should a-jumped when my name and Orthur's was give out. Lor,' Looheaser, do give over—I never see sich a gal for carryin' on—and I was goin' to tell yer as I've made up my mind to be married in a halpacker. I did think of a meriny, as you know, but now I've come to turn it over, seems to me a halpacker's genteeler, and I shall 'ave it made fash'nable, with three rows of—— But there, it's no good talkin'; you won't take nothink serious.'

Liza was very busy and very happy during the next week or two. Not only were there her 'things' to see to, but there were the four chairs and the round table with the shiny top to be purchased. The tea-trays were not included in the outlay after all, as 'the Missis' was going to make her a present of a set. Altogether Liza was jubilant, so much so that the lack of reciprocity on the part of the Lout was hardly noted. The latter had taken two rooms in a back street, and Liza, having paid a visit of inspection and arranged the table and chairs—not to mention the tea-trays—to the best advantage, was so charmed by the result as to declare that 'it only wanted the flower-pot in the winder to make it look real 'an'some.' (The flower-pot in question being an absentee merely in consequence of the intending purchaser not having been able to arrive at a decision as to the conflicting merits of a 'geranyum' or a 'fewcher.') She only wished 'Mother down in Devonshire' could see it all!

Easter Monday broke as though with the intention to do honour to Liza's wedding-day. It was on the very stroke of eleven—just as she, arrayed in new and wonderful garments, with a perfectly astounding bonnet on her head, and all her boxes and belongings packed and corded ready to be sent after her, was saying, 'Thanky'm,' in answer to the missis's 'I wish you well, Eliza,' that there came a knock at the door.

'That'll be Looheaser, I shouldn't wonder,' observed the bride elect.

But it proved to be a slatternly girl with a dirty face and a missive to match, which she tendered with the cursory remark, 'Ere y'are.'

There was no direction beyond thumb-marks, and as Liza examined it she marvelled much, audibly as well as inwardly, as to its import. Finally, having stripped off the outer cover, a scrap of paper was revealed on which a few lines were scrawled in a hand that might have been a foot from the persistent manner in which it ran downhill after the signature that brought up the rear.

Liza, whose education had, for family reasons, been of the most rudimentary and fragmentary order, spelt it over with difficulty. As she did so it appeared to the onlooker that her face became not so much pale as mottled. Then she looked round her in a stunned sort of way.

'I never was much of a 'and at readin' writin',' she murmured. 'Maybe I ain't made it out right, or maybe it's jest 'er fun. She's full o' fun, is our Looheaser.'

She handed the document to her mistress.

'If yer wouldn't mind jest castin' yer eye over it.'

This was how it ran :

'Liza,—Me and Arthur was married this mourning. It was our bands as was put up all along. We'll keep the furnycher as you won't have no use for, and will come in 'andy.—LOUISA.'

'Oh, poor Eliza, what a shameful trick to serve you !'

'So it ain't no joke, you don't think? Then I guess I may as well be takin' off these yer things, and, seein' as you ain't been able to suit yerself, I might as well stop on if agreeable.'

That was all, except that, as she turned away, she muttered, with a little catch in her throat, 'Looheaser might well larf.'

And so the alpaca was taken off and put carefully away. 'Liza 'didn't s'pose she'd never want it now,' and within an hour was scouring pots and pans as though the idea of matrimony was one that had never even been entertained by her. Indeed, during the whole of the ensuing week she worked like a horse, submitting everything in her vicinity—from the children's faces to the dish-covers—to such a power of friction that the eye sought in vain the relief of an unpolished surface to rest upon. This was the only sign she gave, and opinions were divided as to whether she really felt the blow she had received so uncomplainingly.

'Surely you never mean to let them keep the furniture that you bought with your own money?' she was asked.

'Well, I dunno,' was the answer; 'yer see 'twouldn't be no good of to me, and I ain't got nowhere to put it, and I know Looheaser thought no end o' that round table, so I reckon I'll let it be.'

After this things went on about as usual, except that Liza took to going to chapel on Sunday evenings instead of 'walking out.' It was also observable that she broke less; what was more, she and Looheaser 'made it up.' The olive branch having been held out by the latter, was at once grasped, and the contract ratified by a formal tea-drinking, at which Liza enjoyed the doubtful pleasure of sitting on one of her own chairs, and watching Looheaser, who giggled more than ever, preside at the tea-tray to which she could also lay claim.

The first meeting between Orthur and her was freer from the element of embarrassment than might have been expected.

'Hullo, Liza, old gal!' was his greeting, 'come to see 'ow we're a-gettin' on? Looheaser 'n' me we give you the slip, but we don't bear no ill-feelin'. Take a cheer an' make yerself at 'ome.'

'Thanky, Orthur,' was the meek reply. 'I'm much obliged, I'm sure, and I'm glad to see you 'n' Looheaser both lookin' so well.'

Liza took back quite a glowing account of her visit. 'Looheaser 'n' Orthur was as friendly as friendly, and the round table looked beautiful.'

But as the months wore on a little cloud appeared upon her brow, and she was regretfully compelled to allow that things were not going so well as they might in those two rooms in the back street.

'Looheaser,' with tears she admitted it, 'Looheaser was flighty, and too fond o' dress and gossipin' with the neighbours, while Orthur, 'stead o' puttin' up with 'er ways and givin' 'er time to settle, let 'er 'ave the rough side of 'is tongue, and was a deal too often at the public-'ouse at the corner.'

More than once was Liza sent for to act as mediator, and matters seemed to be going from bad to worse, when, fortunately, a digression was caused by the advent of the baby.

Such a wonderful baby! One, indeed—if you credited its aunt's account—that would be hard to beat, not so much on the

score of size, perhaps, as for other distinctive qualities, such as general intelligence and lung power.

She reckoned 'you'd 'ardly meet with one as squalled more, while as for takin' notice——' Liza's vocabulary was quite unequal to the strain put upon it.

There were great doings at the christening. Liza—who even went so far as to don the alpaca in honour of the event—was god-mother.

'Name this child.'

'Orthur, bless 'is 'eart.'

The officiating clergyman looked puzzled for an instant, as though doubting whether this might or might not be a second name.

For a brief while all went well. Looheaser took a pride in the baby, whose yells were quite a feature of the neighbourhood, the Lout kept away from the public-house, and Liza broke a dish and a basin, and seemed to be getting back almost into her old form. How long this halcyon condition of affairs might have endured but for the advent of the piano-organ man it is impossible to say.

He was a picturesque, good-looking vagabond of the usual Italian type, with ear-rings in his ears and a gay-coloured handkerchief round his neck to set off his olive complexion. He made his appearance in the street one day when Looheaser was tired of nursing the baby, who was bored to death with the cutting of his first tooth. The organ struck up a waltz and the baby a howl simultaneously.

'Hold yer noise do,' said his mother, 'and let's 'ear a bit o' moosick.'

The organ-grinder looked up at the girl—for she was not yet twenty—as she stood there with the child in her arms. Her high colouring appealed to his Southern temperament, and he showed his white teeth in a grin. She smiled back at him. 'Lor, what a 'an'some chap, and nothink to do all day but turn a 'andle. I do wish Orthur was like 'im. Drat you!' to the baby, who had just reached a passage marked 'crescendo' in a vocal *obbligato* that bid fair to drown the instrument altogether. 'Will you 'a-done? Ain't I never to 'ave a minnit's peace? I'm most sick of it all, that's what I am.' Then, encouraged by another admiring glance, she tossed her foolish young head with a gratified simper.

After this the man came regularly every week, in addition to

which Looheaser, when she heard the sound of the organ in the distance, would take the baby and stroll in that direction.

It was not long before the neighbours (bless them!) began to talk. They said 'sich conduct on the part of a married woman was purfeckly disgraceful, that it was.'

And so it filtered round to Liza's ears, and she—not that she believed a word of it, not she—ventured to interrogate Looheaser timidly on the subject, who was up in arms at once, and 'wanted to know 'ow she dared, jest because she was fond of a toon, and the man was civil-spoken, spite o' bein' a furriner, as wasn't 'is fault, and she was sick and tired of her life, that she was, and wished she'd never been born, let alone married, and the baby that fractious she hadn't no rest day nor night. And her own sister to take and turn agen her, which was a thing she'd never 'ave believed; but there, she s'posed it was done outer spite cos of 'avin' married Orthur, as had gone on the drink agen, and she wished she'd never set eyes on——' concluding by bursting into noisy tears, while the baby lifted up his voice in sympathy, and Liza felt herself to be an utter barbarian.

This was bad enough, but there was worse to come. A heavy, lurching step without was followed by a dark, slouching body blocking up the doorway, and a thick, beery voice, demanding 'What the dash was this he'd been 'earin' 'bout a blanked organ-grinder as was always 'angin' round an' soft sawderin' 'is missus, who'd better look to 'erself if he ketched 'er up to sich games. While as for that doubly-adjectived furriner, he'd better be quick and sheer off, or the fust time he come acrost 'im he'd give 'im sich a pair o' black eyes as he wouldn't be able to see outer fur a month.'

Over the rest of the scene I prefer to cast a veil. Suffice it to say that Liza returned home with a bump on her forehead, the presence of which she volubly accounted for by having struck her head against 'the mankle shelf.'

For some while after this she was extraordinarily downcast, going about with the air of one who anticipated the worst. One day it came. White and breathless she rushed into her missis's presence and gasped out the terrible tidings that 'Looheaser 'd gone—took everythink she could lay 'ands on and gone away with that orgin-grinder chap, leavin' the baby be'ind 'er, and go she (Liza) must that 'very minnit, for Orthur 'd be comin' 'ome to 'is tea, and no knowin' 'ow he'd take it, pertickler if he'd been 'avin' a

drop; he might even be for doin' that precious hinnercent a hinjury.'

There was no holding her back, and so, with her bonnet pitched on anyhow, and not even stopping to turn down her sleeves, Liza started forth on her mission of love and peril. At six o'clock the outraged husband returned to his desolate home. Liza trembled and hugged the baby closer. The first glance told her that he had been drinking.

'Where's Looheaser?' he growled; 'gaddin' as usual? If that gal don't take 'n' mend 'er ways, I'll——'

Then she broke it to him from behind a bulwark of baby. 'Gorn! bolted! 'ooked it an' left the bloomin' kid be'ind 'er——!'

In an instant semi-intoxication had given way to brutal frenzy. 'Giv' it ter me—gimmy the brat, I tell 'ee, an' I'll chuck it outer winder. I won't ha' nought o' hern.'

But Liza, having deposited the small creature in its cradle, stood before it, short and dumpy, with her rough red arms—not long out of the washing-tub—outstretched after the fashion of a guardian angel.

'You shan't do it, Orthur! Do 'ee listen to me a bit and——'

There was a murderous glare in the eyes that confronted hers.

'Gimmy that there babby—d' ye 'ear?—or t'll be the wuss fur yer.'

'Orthur, you'd never go to 'urt the pretty hinnercent, as it's not 'is fault as——'

All the dormant brutality of the man's lowest nature was upstirred.

'I'll larn yer to come 'ere a-hinterfering in my 'ouse—you as I chucked off like a old shoe. You to stand up agin me an' cheek me to my face! Take that!'

'That' was a heavy blow that sent her staggering. But in an instant she had recovered herself, and before he could follow it up with another, the cradle was empty and Liza was gone.

The return of the latter, with her lip cut, accompanied by the baby in a patchwork counterpane, was an effective overture to the impassioned request that 'the missis would let her keep it jest one night, till she could find some one to take care of it. A better baby nor a quieter never breathed, though, maybe, a bit fretful—and no wonder, through being waked out of 'is sleep so suddent.'

Testimony to this effect on the part of the said baby being taken as read, and permission accorded, Liza laid the luckless

infant in her narrow bed, and vowed a vow which was more or less of a paraphrase of the old Biblical one—'Though yer father and mother forsake yer, Aunt Liza won't.'

Next day the baby was put out to nurse with a decent, motherly woman, who promised 'to do for 'im like he was 'er own at four shillin' a week.'

'But how in the world are you going to pay the money?' it was asked. 'Why, it will swallow up nearly the whole of your wages!'

Liza, thus interrogated, betrayed a slight embarrassment.

'I was thinkin',' she remarked, rolling her blushing arms up in her apron, 'I was thinkin' as p'raps yer wouldn't mind raisin' me a pound or two. Yer see,' hastily, 'I could make it up to yer in other ways. I'd give up my beer willin', an' I dunno but what I'd soon get uster doin' without sugar in my tea. What's more, I always did say as I'd jest as soon 'ave drippin' on my bread as butter. It's what we was all reared on, an' I don't doubt it's a deal wholesomer.'

From the very first the father cast off all responsibility. 'Blow the babby!' was his response to an appeal to the effect that he would contribute something towards the maintenance of his offspring. 'Blow the babby! Take it to the wuck'us.'

Then he proceeded to simplify matters by taking himself off no one knew whither; so that the entire burden fell upon one pair of shoulders which, sturdy as they were, soon began to feel themselves overweighted.

In spite of the many sacrifices cheerfully undergone it was a tight fit to keep that baby going at all. Notwithstanding his aunt's repeated asseverations to the contrary, he had been a weakly child from the first, and no sooner did he find himself bankrupt in respect of parents than he proceeded to put himself through a course of infantile ailments which were as exhaustive to his own constitution as they were to his aunt's exchequer. Measles, bronchitis—anything and everything that came in his way—that baby appropriated as a matter of course. Liza shivered all through one winter in a thin, threadbare jacket so that he might wallow in cod-liver oil.

'Really,' said her mistress, 'I shall have to speak to Eliza about her appearance. I don't believe she has spent a penny on herself for the last year. Her boots are all broken and her cotton dresses nothing but patches. I shall hate doing it, but she

must be made to understand, once for all, that the baby is not everything.'

This, however, was the one fact of all others that the mind of Liza refused to grasp, and what would have been the upshot is not easily surmised had not the knot of the difficulty been eventually severed by the individual most concerned.

The baby, not content with having sampled most of the ailments peculiar to his kind, now proceeded to engage in a single-handed combat with the croup. All through the long hours of one night he fought valiantly for his life; then, when morning came, realising all at once the futility of the struggle, he laid down his arms and went to look for better luck in another world.

Liza pawned the alpaca dress to help bury him, and, having sunk every available penny in crape, looked out with grief-sodden eyes upon a blurred and watery world, and refused to be comforted because now there was no one to whom to offer herself up a living sacrifice.

One day a gleam of brightness shot across the greyness of her mental outlook. It was caused by the sight of the old empty stocking which had once constituted her savings bank.

'I'll begin puttin' by agen,' she said to herself. 'Maybe Looheaser 'll be comin' back some day. She knows I'd never be the one to cast it up in 'er face, and there ain't nobody else to stand by 'er.'

So Liza is silently hoarding up love and money in the fond hope that one day she will be called upon to lavish both upon the outcast.

THE HIBERNIAN HIBERNATING.

It has been a good year for the reapers. The growth of straw was so great that in many districts much of the corn had to be cut by hand labour. The little bands of Irish harvesters, whose annual invasion the English farmer relies upon, were heartily welcomed during the past season, but they have now departed to their cabins in the wild windy West of Ireland, where the corn has as usual ripened but poorly. The greater number of these men are regularly taken on by the same farmers and the pay per day, even after the piece-work—i.e. the cutting—is finished is sufficiently attractive to keep them from seeking work elsewhere. The younger men, however, having no connection, usually travel about in a company to the number of five or six, one of whom goes forward as an advance guard for the purpose of arranging terms with the smaller farmers for the cutting of the crops. This latter *modus operandi* is of course more uncertain, but the itinerant reapers have this year earned more than their brethren. Lean and sunburnt, they have now returned to the land of their birth; for seldom can any of them be induced to sojourn for the winter in the tents of the Sassenach.

In the county Mayo, from which four-fifths of the harvestmen hail, the corn is often not garnered till late in October. The aggregate yield is insignificant enough, but its importance in the owner's imagination is profound, and he will hasten home as soon as possible, not necessarily to work, but to be present at the gathering. There is a remarkable contrast between the acre or two of stunted oats or barley growing in peaty soil, encompassed by deep bog drains which lose themselves in the huge waste of unreclaimed moorland surrounding these miserable farms, and the great fields of waving wheat in England, with their green hedges and comfortable-looking farm-buildings, peeping out complacently from the sheltering trees. The Hibernian cares little for the sleekness and prosperity suggested by the English farmer's homestead. He comes over to earn gold, to work like the bee for the honey which is to feed him in the winter, and he does not pause drone-like to bask in the sunshine or to admire the scene of his labours. What time 'coldly sadly descends' the evening of the year, he migrates like a bird of passage to his winter home

in the gloomy West. Gold he does earn, and good work he gives in return. The expenses are slight : he is unaccustomed to the meat diet of Hodge, and his lodging—the barn—costs nothing. Beyond the inevitable drinking-bout when the weather vetoes harvest work, or upon an occasional Saturday night's debauch, he spends little money in this country. To have a big lump sum in his pocket when he starts for home is his great object. When he secures that he is content. Visions of a glorious lazy time in some wretched *shebeen* drinking pint after pint of black porter pass dreamily through his brain, and the walk home over the soft springy peat marsh amid the bogholes and the incessant rain enters not for a moment into his calculations. Then there is the excitement of travel before him and the welcome of his kinsmen assured by their knowledge that a goodly sum of gold is in his possession, and that he will doubtless stand treat to them all. Not that their welcome would be the less hearty or spontaneous if he arrived bruised and penniless in consequence of a fight while *en route* in some squalid Dublin slum, a not infrequent occurrence to the harvestman in the days when he sowed his wild oats. Let us suppose, however, that fortune has been kind, the homeward journey almost completed without accident, and not more than a couple of trains missed through inadvertence. He has 12*l.* or more intact. The night train from Dublin has landed him in the small hours of the morning at the nearest Connaught station to his mud cottage, which is probably not less than ten Irish miles away. What of the distance? Is it not his own old home that he is making for, where he was born and bred, and is not every yard of the way familiar? The usual west wind is blowing fresh, and the usual fine wetting rain is beating upon his old weather-worn clothes and unshaven face. His step is no longer the slow heavy plod of the toiler of the field, for his boots are now slung with his bundle to the short stick which he carries over his shoulder ; he feels free and unfettered as he travels barefooted mile after mile of the bleak, monotonous road. There are probably several comrades from the harvest walking to their homes in the same neighbourhood, and they keep together in an irregular company, seldom exchanging a word, though all are filled with an inexpressible feeling of buoyancy and happiness. Slowly, and almost imperceptibly, the morning breaks, for the mist lies low on the mountains, and darkness reluctantly gives place to the dusky grey of the dawn. The ranks of the returning harvestmen are

thinned as they diverge one by one across the bog to their holdings far up in some lonely town-land, where perhaps an illicit still even now exists, though the *poteen* is rarely made from anything better than molasses. The call of the curlew and the plaintive whistle of the golden plover, now heard from a distance and again right overhead, sound like music to the harvestmen. A blur of blue turf smoke indicates the position of the mud cabin, which is itself hardly discernible, but which nevertheless, with its few roods of cultivated land, stands out like an island in the ocean of bog. This is the harvestman's home, which he loves so dearly and to return to which is so sweet. It consists of two rooms and possibly a small semi-detached outhouse which is used as a storeroom for perishable articles. There is not a chink in the walls or thatch save a narrow chimney, which seldom if ever answers its purpose; the doorway faces the east and emits the smoke. What little light penetrates inside through the tiny window discloses the deep chocolate stain from the eternal turf-reek which pervades the atmosphere of the interior, and literally paints walls, roof and furniture a uniform colour. The furniture is rough and also scanty, a few stools atoning for the occasional complete absence of chairs. The mud floor is always more or less wet from the pattering of the children's bare feet or from the animals which have free access to the house. At night there is a goodly company within the walls of this spacious mansion. In the inside room there are two or three box beds or berths where the children sleep according to their age and sex; from nine to twelve is not an uncommon number in a family. In the state berth in the *calliogh*, or recess at the side of the hearth, the father and mother repose unscreened from the live stock of the farm, and breathe the same atmosphere as some eight quadrupeds besides the poultry. Pigs, cattle, dogs, cats, and probably a horse or donkey, have their bed space respectively, and jealously resent any encroachment by a bedfellow. Astonishing as it may appear, there are hardly any disagreeable odours. The overpowering smell of the peat-smoke evidently acts as a complete disinfectant, and fortunately it is innocuous to the inhabitants of the hovel. Equally astonishing is the fact that the whole community are in comparative harmony, and even the babies rarely cry. There is plenty of occupation for all the family who are able and willing to work, the mother doing little else but nurse the youngest infant. The harvestman from the day of his return is a changed man. His toil is over for the

year, and he quietly settles down with a fixed determination to enjoy himself during the winter months. He has inherited only one form of everyday enjoyment and he has learnt no other. In his opinion, to be absolutely idle is identical with true happiness: in short, he hibernates. A week suffices for him to hear all the gossip of the neighbourhood, and (as a matter of course) he gets hopelessly intoxicated with his friends for a few nights. His wife and family busy themselves in the fields, while he looks on approvingly, or perhaps in a desultory way lends a hand for a few hours. As autumn fades into winter there is not much work of a pressing nature on hand, and the harvestman hibernates more thoroughly. A friend or kinsman calls in occasionally and meets with ready hospitality, but the master of the house seldom stirs from his own domain. His wife sits on the bedside by the fire teasing wool or knitting stockings, as the case may be, and pours forth some bitter invective on the conduct of a neighbour; he listens languidly, sighs wearily at intervals, and draws closer to the fire, but he heeds her not at all. Apart from faction feuds of great antiquity, there are few anxieties in the life of the Irish peasant. When adversity does visit him, he is completely unstrung, and drowns his grief in the oblivion born of fiery whisky or new *poteen*. In a few days it is all forgotten, and a stoical resignation settles down upon him, though secretly he feels something akin to pleasure in the misfortune.

Politics are completely out of fashion nowadays among the peasantry; and our harvestman, though better informed in these matters from his visits to England, takes but an intermittent interest in the whole question during the period of his hibernation. He is content to leave the 'bhoys'—*i.e.* the unmarried men—to take any drastic measures inspired by the professional agitators, and he pays a year's reduced rent simply because even his fertile imagination can suggest no reason why he should try his landlord's patience further by sinking deeper into arrear. Political meetings excite him to the same extent as a fair day, and on the morrow the usual reaction from a day's dissipation ensues. When sportsmen come for a day's shooting on the surrounding bog, he offers to show them places where the snipe 'fairly jostle one another.' On these occasions the harvestman is seen at his best, for he is a genuine sportsman, and a drop of whisky from the 'jintlemen' is far more pleasing to him than any other remuneration for his services. A day or two of sport

such as this (for he has not the appliances or the market to be tempted to poach), the monthly fair days, and the drinking-bouts which always attend a funeral or a wake, are the only times when he rouses himself from the state of hibernation.

Theoretically, he is discontented with his condition, and believes himself a victim to injustice and oppression; but in reality he is quite satisfied with his lot, and never dreams of bettering it or altering his mode of living. On the few fine days when a frosty sun lights up the sombre bog and the lakes and mountains rejoice in the unexpected brightness, he thinks of joining the elder children in their work about the farm. Some of them have gone to fetch home seaweed for manure or are looking for wreckage from the wide Atlantic, should the cabin be near the sea. The thought, however, seldom ripens into action, and he gets no farther than the top of some eminence near the holding, ostensibly to look after the sheep, but in reality to scan the horizon for what is vaguely termed in the West 'gapeseed,' or in idle curiosity. Thus the winter drags out its weary length, and so it has been passed for many a decade, but the harvestman is as insensible to its monotony as he is to the damp and to all the other discomforts of his home. When the spring comes, he will rise from his lethargy and work with zeal once more, for he is a good agriculturist, and there is abundance of work to be got through during seedtime before the annual exodus for the English hay-harvest takes place from the West of Ireland.

TWO FAMILY HISTORIES.

THE carps, as a family, come originally from the Himalayan and Thibetan region. In Central Asia their ancestors first achieved distinction.

How do I know that, pray? Well, how do I know that the Griffiths, the Evanses, and the Lloyds come originally from Wales? There are Evanses by the dozen in London and Liverpool, in New York and Melbourne. There are Griffiths in Calcutta, in Montreal, in Manchester. There are Lloyds in Chicago. But there are more Evanses and more Griffiths in gallant little Wales than in all the rest of both hemispheres put together. Moreover, as we go further and further away from Wales in every direction, the proportion of Evanses, of Griffiths, and of Lloyds to the total population diminishes rapidly. And again, if we look back a little in time, we find documentary evidence of many an Evans and many a Griffith within the Principality, but few or none outside it. Finally several persons bearing either name, but living elsewhere in the world, may demonstrably be traced back to Carnarvon or Glamorgan. Hence, on the whole, we are fairly justified in concluding that every Griffith and every Evans is in the last resort of more or less remote Cymric ancestry.

It is just the same with the carps. They are a big tribe indeed, and they are divided nowadays into several branches in various parts of the world, more or less resembling one another in their general features, though differing considerably in detail, and more especially in points of external appearance. A technical naturalist would say that the carps (including the roaches, bream, and minnows) were a large and widespread family, divided into several genera and species. But when we come to trace them back we find the nature of their existing distribution points inevitably to the conclusion that the family took its rise in the uplands of Central Asia, and has thence been dispersed through the ponds and rivers of the terrestrial world by colonisation and migration. Carps are most numerous and varied in and around their original home; they thin out in kinds as they radiate away from it to north and south, to east and west, across the spreading

continents; and they have not reached at all as yet, on their secular march, to the most outlying or isolated land areas.

These vicissitudes of noble families—if Sir Bernard Burke will permit me to encroach so far upon his copyright—form an interesting part of that wonderful romance of natural history first opened up for us by the doctrine of evolution. For we now know that we can trace the history of each genus or species through space and time by means of its geographical and geological distribution. The carps, for example, are a very ancient race. No family in England, or even in China, can vie with them in antiquity. They are older by centuries than the Pharaohs of the Pyramids. They must have started a very long time ago in the Alpine region of Central Asia, for their fossil remains are found already in the deposits of tertiary fresh-water lakes in France and Germany, as well as in similar dry lake-bottoms from Sumatra on the one hand to Idaho, in the far west of America, on the other. Now fresh-water fish go by *petite vitesse*, they travel slow in dispersing themselves from country to country, because mountain chains form difficult barriers for them to surmount in their migrations. A family, therefore, which had already achieved distinction and spread out into many genera and species in Europe, Asia, and America during the tertiary period must have begun to exist at a much earlier epoch, and must indeed be reckoned among the fish peerage of our time as of most honourable antiquity.

On the other hand, though the carps are a travelled class, well dispersed through the world in many countries, they cannot be considered as in the strictest sense of the word cosmopolitan. To be sure, they have colonised Europe, Asia, Africa, and North America—which is well enough for a beginning; but they have never succeeded in crossing the long and narrow mountain isthmus of Panama, so that they are unknown as yet in any part of the South American continent. Still more has the wide ocean proved a bar to their progress: they hate the sea, and therefore not a carp exists in the rivers of Australia or in any of the scattered Pacific Islands. The family, in short, has dispersed itself overland from its Himalayan home through the whole of the Eastern continent; it crossed over to America long since by the rivers and lakes of the great land belt which once united Scandinavia with Iceland and Greenland; but it has not yet had time to traverse the long upland barrier of Panama, or to transport itself over the Pacific and the Indian Oceans.

This first little rough sketch of a family history will serve to show in broad outline what is the sort of problems which confront the historian of organic life, and what are the chief means at his disposal for solving them. The evidence is often tolerably wide and conclusive. For instance, not only do we find remains of carps at many different points in the tertiary deposits, but we find them already in the most varied forms, belonging to some fifteen or sixteen genera—types as distinct in character as barbels and gudgeons and dace and tench and loaches, all of which show descent from the common carp ancestor. From this we may conclude that the family had even then existed long enough, not only to spread itself widely over lakes and rivers, but also to split itself up into an immense variety of specialised forms, each adapted to some particular niche in nature.

Now, how does such a family manage to get itself dispersed, and what are the causes which lead it to break up into many various forms, all alike in central type, yet differing much from one another in endless minor particulars? Well, we must remember, to begin with, that the carps as a group are all fresh-water fishes. In general organisation they are admirably adapted for life in ponds and lakes, in brooks and rivers. One primitive ancestral carp, no doubt, got developed by natural selection, in adaptation to the needs of a fresh-water existence, at some very early period, among the snow-fed streams of the Himalayan district. Now that gave him a great pull; for just consider what an admirable centre the Himalayas form for a fresh-water race desirous of dispersing itself through the rivers of our planet. The great Central Asian mountain-land feeds on the one hand the broad Arctic streams of Siberia, and on the other hand the Indus, the Ganges, the Jumna, and the Brahmapootra. Our rising carp family had thus a splendid chance of going north, and acclimatising itself to very cold conditions; or of going south to bask in the sunshine of tropical India. Nor was that all. Eastward it could descend into China by the Hoang Ho and the Yang-tse-Kiang; westward, it could invade Turkestan and the Caspian district by way of the Oxus and the Sea of Aral. In fact, if a fresh-water fish wanted to start in life under the very best circumstances for obtaining in the end (like a famous London weekly) 'a world-wide circulation,' it could not do better than begin by publishing itself in the backbone highlands of Central Asia.

Experience has amply justified the family of the *Cyprinidæ*

—that is their official title—in their choice of a birthplace. At the present day they are remarkable among fresh-water fishes for their cosmopolitan tastes and almost universal distribution. About one-third of the species of lake or river fish now known to science—or what comes, perhaps, to the same thing, to Doctor Günther, of the British Museum—belong to this successful and enterprising family. They can stand, in one form or another, every type of climate, from the arctic and the temperate to the most sweltering heat of tropical regions. They have blossomed out into an immense variety of forms of all weights and sizes, in endless adaptation to every possible type of fresh-water existence. Some are big, like the true carp, which sometimes reaches five feet in length; others are tiny, like the minnows, the gudgeons, and the skulking little stone-loaches. Some are browserers, which feed only on vegetable food; others are savage carnivores, or feeders on snails and aquatic insects. Some prefer little ponds; some lurk in big lakes; some are adapted to the motion of slow and tranquil streams; some can dart on powerful fins against the swirling current of swift mountain-fed torrents. They agree in nothing but in their technical characters, though a striking similarity of general type—a family likeness, in fact—runs, like a common thread, through hundreds of known species.

The mode of dispersion of the carps over three parts of the globe throws some light upon the migration and limitations of animals in general. The cyprinoids are in type a peculiarly fresh-water race—that, in fact, is their *raison d'être*, the true secret of their success: they are exactly adapted in form and structure to a fresh-water existence. But they hate the sea, as might naturally be expected from so pond-haunting and river-loving a family, and though the true carp can manage to exist even in the brackish water of the Caspian, not one member of the family has ever yet accommodated itself to a truly marine existence. Hence the ocean forms a complete barrier to the progress of the race. No species of this vast group has ever succeeded in getting across from Asia to Australia; for Australia, as I have already noted in this magazine, has been shewn by Mr. Alfred Russel Wallace to have been separated by a deep-sea belt from the whole of Asia ever since the remote period when the chalk was laid down on the rolling floor of the secondary oceans. On the other hand, the carps could easily diffuse themselves over the whole of Asia; for the rivers which radiate in every direction

from the central uplands serve them as ready-made highways. It would also be easy for them, with the Caspian as base, to overrun the eastern and central plains of Europe, by means of the Volga, the Danube, the Rhine, and other water-ways.

But how could they cross the North Sea into England, or the Atlantic into America, and how could they transcend the mountain ranges from watershed to watershed? How account for their presence in Spain, beyond the wall of the Pyrenees, for their presence in Italy, hemmed in on either side by Alps and by Apennines? These questions lead us into the core of the problem of animal distribution. Fresh-water fish—to confine ourselves entirely to the subject here and now under investigation—are greatly aided in their dispersion and their colonisation of fresh areas by natural changes. Floods will often carry adult fishes, and still oftener eggs or spawn, from the basin of one lake or river into another. Inundated plains or meadows will often render it possible for individual fish to swim from one system into its neighbour system. Tarns or torrents into which the fish fauna on the southern side of a mountain range has ascended, may, by the action of glaciers, of denudation, or of volcanic eruption, be made to empty themselves on the northern side, and so to introduce new fish or mollusks into the northern area. Changes of these and other like kinds are continually taking place, though with very great slowness where large areas are affected. Here, land is rising; there, it is subsiding. Here, rivers are being diverted; there, lakes are being formed, or filled up, or divided. Every freshet tells: in one way or another, the net-work of waterways interoscules in time with infinite diversity. Streams or meres which once fed this river now feed that one. Lakes which emptied here, now empty there. And so, by slow degrees, the fish that inhabit them spread into new districts, and themselves undergo changes of more or less importance in adaptation to the altered conditions they find in them. All nature is a flux, and all life flows with it.

To make a long story short, when the members of the carp family which now inhabit Britain first entered these islands, these islands (if I may be permitted so obvious a bull) still formed part of the continent. When the carp of North America first settled beyond the Atlantic, no Atlantic barred their path; they entered the New World by means of the rivers and lakes in the now submerged land belt which once united the Palearctic area

of Europe with the Nearctic of America. In the endless slow changes of mountain and valley, of island and peninsula, of lake and lowlands, endless slow re-distributions of fauna and flora have ever taken place, and still take place continuously. Within a single lifetime I have noted in Britain itself not a few of them.

There is another way, too, perhaps less obvious, in which fish may be transported from one area to another. They may cling as eggs, embedded in mud, on the feet of aquatic birds like herons or water-ouzels. Such eggs may then be easily transported over great mountain ranges or across climatic belts, and may be dropped again by the bird in some distant pond or some icy-cold torrent. I mention this case merely as one example of the many subsidiary processes by which migration is often made possible. Even wild beasts coming to drink may act as unconscious Pick-fords in the interests of pisciculture. At any rate, the result is certain: when once a well-adapted form has established itself anywhere it proceeds to spread, though often by slow degrees, into every situation in surrounding areas which is at all well adapted for it. Absolute barrier there is none; relative barriers are surmounted one by one as chance or fortune favours.

I may, perhaps, venture also to say a few words in detail about some of the best known carps individually, before I pass on and proceed to introduce my second family, the siluroids. This course is all the more allowable, indeed, as several of the *Cyprinidæ* are British subjects, while the siluroids to a man are all absolute aliens. Nay, more; the carp, as a group, form the mass of the inhabitants of our ponds and rivers: they can be adequately described by honest and straight-forward English names, instead of being compelled to take refuge under some learned Latin *alias*. Our most aristocratic fresh-water species, it is true—like the trout, the charr, the pollan, and the grayling—belong to the rival clan of the *Salmonidæ*, whose chief is the king of fish himself, the unrivalled salmon. But most of the so-called ‘coarse fish’ of Britain are genuine cyprinoids, and though they are inferior to the trout and salmon group from the culinary standpoint, they are superior to them in number, in variety, and in antiquity.

The true carp, who occupies the proud position of head of the family, is but a naturalised alien in our British waters. By origin he is a Chinaman, and he still abounds in his wild condition among the mighty rivers of the Flowery Land. The human

Chinaman, however, has been noted from all time for his strict attention to the main chance; he doesn't let the grass grow under his feet, and never allows a good thing to escape him. So, many centuries since, he domesticated the carp and passed it on by transport to his friends and neighbours. At an early date the Oriental stranger was naturalised in Germany; and in the days of James I. it arrived in England. Its diffusion by human hands is facilitated by the fact that it can live for many weeks at a time out of water, especially if packed in moist leaves or damp linen. This is a common peculiarity of pond-haunting fishes, for ponds are always liable to dry up in summer, and the fish which inhabit them have therefore learnt from ancestral experience to bury themselves in the mud while the drought lasts, and to do as best they may without a supply of water. In fact, existing species of pond fish are the descendants of the survivors which have thus managed to escape the droughts of ages. When packing live carp for transport by post, some authorities recommend placing in their mouths a small piece of bread, well steeped in brandy; but I do not myself approve of this plan, as I believe it tends to encourage the fish in a disastrous love for ardent spirits. The eminently respectable Dutch, on the other hand, keep carp through the winter hung up in baskets, but feed them on a blameless course of bread and milk, which the sternest moralist could not fail to approve of.

Carp are mostly herbivorous, with occasional relapses into the vice of meat-eating. They feed on a simple diet of water plants, just varied by the grubs of pond insects, small snails, and earth-worms. While food abounds they eat for dear life with astounding voracity; but when winter comes on they assemble in their millions, or as near it as they can get, and bury themselves in the mud, where they pass several months in a fasting condition. They can give Succa points, indeed, and beat him by six weeks or so. The carp is also a very domestic animal. His wife lays half-a-million eggs at a birth, the vast majority of which, however, are cut off in early youth by the enemies of their species. But what parent can be expected to look adequately after a family of five hundred thousand? The weight of responsibility is too minutely sub-divided, and accidents carry off ninety-nine per cent. as infant mortality. The few survivors grow, in favourable circumstances, to an enormous size. Dr. Günther mentions, with some just reserve, the case of a carp which was caught in Germany, and

which measured nine feet from the end of his snout to the tip of his tail. But this, as the Americans say, is perhaps 'a fish story.'

The gold fish is also a carp by family. He inhabits drawing-rooms. By origin he is a native of Japan and China, but in his wild condition he is simply brown : domestication and the heathen Chinese have succeeded between them in imparting to his skin a brilliant golden colouring. The telescope fish, with his quaintly protruding goggle eyes, is a monstrosity of the gold fish, produced, like the dachshund, by careful selection. His habitat is the aquarium. Science will have none of him.

Our other British carps, whose name is legion, include the barbels, the gudgeons, the roach, the dace, the tench, and the minnow. Among them they form the vast majority of the fish population in our lakes and rivers. But their individual characters are of interest, as a rule, only to boys and anglers.

The great rivals of the carps are the siluroids, or cat-fish. This respectable but by no means distinguished family shares with the cyprinoids the dominion of the inland waters. A third of the known species of fresh-water fish are carps by tribe ; a fourth are cat-fish. But as the family of the siluroids has no representative at all in Britain, it is less locally interesting to us than the great clan of its rivals. Still, cat-fish abound in Canada and India, so that they may pass muster, in the wider sense of the words, as British subjects. They are for the most part ugly, naked-skinned fishes, with fleshy beards or barbels, not unlike gigantic tadpoles in outer appearance ; but they exhibit an immense variety of forms, differing far more widely among themselves in features and structure than do their rivals the cyprinoids. Very few of them are edible, and many are loathsome.

It is the origin and distribution of this curious family, however, which I wish here to lay stress upon. Their annals are still stranger and more adventurous in their way than those of the carp-like fishes. The siluroids, according to Dr. Günther, are a newer race on our earth than the carps : their fossil remains are found only in the tertiary deposits of India, while not a bone of them has yet been detected anywhere in the dry lake-beds of prehistoric Europe. Nor are they, like so many of the carps, lovers of rapid, snow-fed torrents. On the contrary, the siluroids are essentially mud fish, denizens of the sluggish waters of the plains. They were tropical, and probably Indian in origin, developing later than the carps, and ill adapted by their fins for

rising high into mountain rivers, where the headwaters of different basins are most likely to intercommunicate. The cat-fish would thus seem at first sight to have started in life at a grave disadvantage, which would make them poor competitors in the struggle for existence over four great continents. But they had two points in their favour which have enabled them in the end almost to overtake their powerful enemies, and, so far as distribution in space goes, positively to outstrip them. In the first place, they can live very well in damp mud, or even travel on their own fins across dry land. In the second place, they don't mind salt; they can pass by slow degrees through the brackish waters of estuaries into the open sea, and even traverse broad stretches of intervening ocean. The consequence is that the cat-fish already almost equal the carps in variety of species, while they beat them easily in the matter of colonial enterprise.

Still, to the present day, the tribe is chiefly tropical. Beginning life most probably in tropical India during the tertiary period, the cat-fish spread with extraordinary rapidity over the equatorial zone. Within the short space of a few hundred thousand years (I speak as a geologist) they had overrun the warmer parts of Asia and Africa, and had crossed the North Pacific (by Behring's Straits, I suspect) from Japan to America. From India, aided by their power of standing a sea voyage, they attacked Australia, where the more purely fluviatile carp had never been able to emigrate. In America they occupied both the northern and southern continents; and from Peru or Ecuador one species even succeeded in making its way into the Sandwich Islands, where it lives to this day in the rivers of Hawaii. But the coral islands of the Pacific still remain uncolonised by the intrepid cat-fish.

On the other hand, the cat-fish, being so essentially tropical, made much slower progress into the temperate regions than the carps who preceded them. A few crossed the Himalayas into Northern Asia; still fewer made their way *viâ* the Caspian into Europe; and no member of the group has yet managed to travel as far to the north-west in this direction as Britain. In America cat-fish are abundant as far north as Canada, where one species is frequently caught as manure for the fields by the thrifty farmers. My own innocent youth knew him well in Lake Ontario. Into the south temperate zone, as Dr. Günther remarks, the siluroids have penetrated still more slowly. Tropical Australia they have annexed; but not a single cat-fish has made his way across sea to

Tasmania or New Zealand. * The warmer parts of South America possess a great variety of interesting forms ; but as one goes south towards the temperate regions of the continent they tail off in Chili into a few small species which inhabit the rushing torrents of the Andes, and practically replace the loaches of the northern hemisphere. None at all have acclimatised themselves in the cold streams of Patagonia.

The history of these two families, thus traced for us in detail by the geological record and the existing distribution, has always appeared to me one of the most interesting chapters in the great book of evolution. It explains to us at a glance why these various fish occupy at present the exact areas in which they now live, and how they have arrived at their existing habitats and their existing variety.

I must say a few brief words, however, before concluding these annals about the individual members of the cat-fish group. One species alone has managed to take up its abode in Europe. This is the Wels of the Germans, the true silurus, from which the family as a whole derives its name of siluroids. It occurs in the Danube and other eastern rivers, but has never made its way into the Rhine or any streams to the west of it. Except the sturgeon, the Wels is the biggest (and, I will venture to add, the ugliest) of European fresh-water fishes. Its huge, gaping mouth, its soft, slimy skin, its six big barbels, and its murderous expression all combine to render it peculiarly hideous. Some specimens reach the length of sixteen feet, and turn the scale at four hundred pounds ; but these figures, being fisherman's weight, may be accepted by the wise *cum grano salis*. I do not guarantee them. According to Yarrel, a Prussian specimen of silurus had the entire body of a baby in its stomach ; but a noble Hungarian cat-fish goes this story one better, for it is said to have contained 'the body of a young woman with a wedding-ring on her finger and a purse full of money hanging at her girdle.' I can swallow the lady, but I decline to accept the wedding-ring and the florins.

Of other siluroids the one best known in society is the electric cat-fish, which plays its pranks in the Nile and the West African rivers. This startling beast possesses the power of stunning its prey by a sudden shock from its own internal galvanic battery. Its powers of shocking, however, are far inferior to those of the electric eel and the American young woman, inasmuch as it is only dangerous to very small animals.

Many of the cat-fish have considerable powers of living out of water. These are chiefly inhabitants of muddy and marshy places. The South American doras travels across country during the dry season from its own shrivelled pond in search of larger bodies of water. The migrating hordes often spend several nights on the way, and rest during the daytime under the protection of foliage. Several other species, both in South America and elsewhere, are similarly given to cross-country journeys; they have a sort of foot-like organ with which they walk, after the fashion of the gurnards, and they are protected against attack by bony plates or shields which cover the whole body, as well as by defensive spines in the style of the stickleback. Another small South American group of cat-fish were believed by Humboldt (who was by no means credulous) to inhabit the subterranean waters in the volcanoes of the Andes, and to be ejected with mud-streams during violent eruptions. It has been noted, however, that the fish don't come out ready boiled, as might naturally be expected from a volcanic species; and Dr. Günther, after the unromantic fashion of modern science, explains their appearance during the prevalence of eruptions by the simple fact that they abound in the lakes and torrents of the Andes, that they are killed by the escape of sulphuretted gases, and that they are then swept down by the floods of water which issue from the volcano in its moments of excitement.

The other little cat-fish of the Andes, to which I have already referred, are extremely interesting from their close resemblance to the northern loaches, alike in appearance, in habits, and even in colouration. But the loaches belong to the carp tribe, while these little Chilian fish are modified siluroids. The fact is, wherever you get similar conditions in nature, similar forms are developed in adaptation to them. If the carp family could only have got across Panama into South America, we should have had true loaches in the rapid mountain torrents that tear down the slopes of the Andes. But as they couldn't, the siluroids, which had the field to themselves, proceeded to develop little torrent-haunting forms, which are cat-fish in structure but loaches in appearance and external features. Such *rapprochements* of fundamentally unlike forms are common everywhere in like circumstances.

HOME TO THEE.

HOME—but not to thee, sweet,
 As so oft before,
 Home—but home to thee, sweet,
 Never, nevermore.

Laggard grow the feet, sweet,
 Dragging wearily,
 That stepped once so fleet, sweet,
 Home to Love and thee.

Thou'rt not there to greet, sweet,
 Nor to welcome me,
 I no more shall meet, sweet,
 Home and Heav'n in thee.

Home! without thy smile, sweet?
 Home! without thy kiss?
 Home! without thy heart, sweet?
 Home! and *that* to miss?

Home! no, not to me, sweet,
 Till there can be this—
 Daylight without sun, sweet,
 Heaven without bliss.

Yet—thou art at home, sweet,
 Waiting still for me,
 While I homeless roam, sweet,—
 Home eternally.

And my steps may be, sweet,
 Evermore may be,
 Home, still home to thee, sweet,
 Home to God and thee!

JOHN GAVIN'S ACCIDENT.

A RUSTIC IDYLL.

THE garden was full of purple mallows. In the neighbourhood these were called geraniums, and when an opinion was expressed regarding geraniums, it was always with the purple mallow in view.

People thought the Yardleys might have kept a prettier garden, as there were two girls in the family with a good deal of spare time on their hands; but the fact is, if the best blooms in the year had appeared there in rotation, the neighbours would not have pronounced favourable judgment. Mrs. Yardley was too self-satisfied to be popular, and her daughters were unduly attractive. When there are not men enough to go round, it is manifestly unfair that one house should monopolise all the eligibles of the district.

On this occasion Lizzie, the younger girl, stood by the door, with her needlework in her hand—needlework was not Lizzie's forte, and she pricked her fingers a good deal, perhaps because she glanced away from it so frequently to look over the downs.

Evidently she was watching for some one; that that someone was not the man who approached, the slight frown between her eyes and her pouting underlip proved. But she said 'Good-evening' civilly, as he stopped by the garden gate.

'Good-evening, Lizzie,' he answered, as he lifted the latch to come up the path between the mallows, his face beaming with health and good-humour. 'Are you all alone?' If she was not disposed to be cordial, he was.

'Yes; mother went to see Mrs. Ward, who is ill, and Ellen is gone to Grimpat. I expect her back every minute.'

'She will not be back for a good while yet,' the man rejoined, and he was laughing.

'How do you know?' The girl folded her work as she spoke and turned indoors with a certain impatience.

'I overtook her and Willie Hewlett, and it seems they have settled matters.'

'I don't know what you mean,' the girl said, with a haughty inflection of the voice.

'I knew by the look of them what they had been speakin' of, and I asked them might I wish them joy, and they said "Yes."'

'They were joking.'

'Not a bit of it,' the man maintained sturdily; 'they have fixed the weddin'-day and everything, and they are coming on at their leisure to tell you all about it.'

Lizzie sat down on the edge of the table, a glitter of resentment in her eyes, and the hands that held her needlework twitching a little.

'I never thought Willie cared for Ellen,' she said.

'No more did I. I always thought it was you he wanted. I hope he has not been makin' a fool of you, Lizzie.'

'What a stupid goose you are,' the girl answered, with a little, not unmerited, disdain.

'I was always a goose to your thinkin',' Gavin said resentfully, 'but I loved you, which smarter people don't seem to have done.'

Lizzie neither looked at him nor spoke.

'See here,' he went on after a pause. 'Why should we not have a double weddin'? I am as good a fellow as Hewlett, though you mayn't always have thought so, and if we were all married at the same time it would put people from thinkin'——'

'From thinking what?' The blaze of indignation in her eyes might have warned him had he been more observant.

'From thinkin'—oh, well, from thinkin' that he might have had either of you, and that he chose Ellen.'

'And do you believe that anybody—anybody could think you had been preferred to Willie Hewlett?' She was in the temper that wants to wound, and therefore seizes the first weapon that is available.

'Well, I don't know. When half a dozen other men have thrown you over maybe you won't think so badly of me.'

She gave a gasp under the shock of this not altogether undeserved retort, and the colour rose in a wave to the dark line of her hair.

The man was penitent in a moment. 'I dare say you think I'm a brute,' he said; 'but somehow you always drive me to say things I don't think and never want to think. I love you, Lizzie. I've loved you always since you were the height of the table, and if you could only try to care for me I should make you rare and happy.'

He was in dangerous proximity to her as he stooped over her. She swung round suddenly, and struck at his pleading face with her open hand, all her resentment, sense of affront, and humiliation adding to the sting of the blow. 'You great stupid oaf! will you never understand that I hate you?' she said.

The man reeled slightly, more under the shock than the weight of the stroke, and his flushed, smiling face grew pale. 'You vixen,' he said, 'to strike a man for loving you! Well, it's ended now; you'll miss me before I'll trouble you again,' and lifting his little cap off the table, he flung it on his blond head and walked out, his shoulders thrown back and his mouth set like a vice.

Lizzie looked after him with a curious sense of dismay. It was not like John to look or walk like that. She watched him out of sight in a kind of bewilderment, and then she hid her face in her hands and cried as if her heart would break. Men were all abominable, all of them, traitors or savages, and she did not know which were worse. The curious thing was that any girl who respected herself should care what they thought or did.

But she had recovered before the lovers came in, and she offered her congratulations with a kind of patient sweetness that would have struck them had they had thoughts for any but themselves.

That day's incident set the whole neighbourhood agog. Ellen Yardley was to marry Willie Hewlett, and Lizzie and John Gavin had quarrelled. It was not very clear how the latter fact came out, though it was surmised that a bantering friend had advised John to push his fortune now, and that John had answered that he had had quite enough of Lizzie Yardley, which speech, added to the circumstance that he never went near the house, carried conviction of a quarrel to every mind.

Reticence is not an affection of country tongues. The neighbours came successively to see the Yardleys, to congratulate Ellen, and to probe Lizzie's wounds to the quick, partly because this is usual and nobody is expected to resent it, and partly because they were really curious to know if the latter suffered—if she had liked Willie Hewlett overmuch, and why she had quarrelled with John Gavin. When Lizzie grew restless under this treatment, and once or twice requested an over-officious friend to mind her own business, the friend did not hesitate to answer that neither John Gavin nor anybody else could be expected to put up with her temper.

Lizzie had always been Mrs. Yardley's favourite, and the preference was obvious to everyone, painfully so to Ellen often, but from the new state of affairs the mother seemed to derive much comfort. To get her plainer daughter well settled was surely a greater triumph than to dispose of the pretty one.

Everything seemed against Lizzie in those days. It was Ellen who was the interesting figure now, Ellen who received the compliments and good wishes, Ellen who naturally expected to be served and thought about, and Lizzie who was allotted the painful task of being subordinate.

It is very hard to become all at once the useful member of the family, the one who cooks while others feast, the one who pipes that others may dance, the one who acts super while the others play the heroic rôles, but a hundred times harder is it if the new underling is a dethroned queen. Lizzie had thought to be of consequence once, but that was before Ellen had a lover, or John Gavin had become an enemy.

It was curious how she missed Gavin; he was like a garment she had become accustomed to. It was not in her gala hours he came into her mind, but when she wanted to rest and be at peace. She saw him mentally a hundred times, and it was always with that last masterful look on his face, and the proud swing in his gait as he walked away. It was not altogether her fault that they were enemies. She had told him a score of times before that she hated him, and he had never minded till that day; and in the quarrel she had not been the only one to blame. Now everybody seemed to conspire to put him more and more into her mind, by praising him, by saying how he excelled in every way, how he was the very pick of the parish. And nobody had ever said that, nobody, when it would have mattered!

Her hope was that he would come to Ellen's wedding, and that he and she would be friends again. She was a warm-hearted creature who hated to be at feud with anybody; and she had been sufficiently snubbed and repressed lately to be ready to offer the olive branch if necessary. But John refused Willie's invitation; he had been at two weddings, he said, and the third must be his own.

She had met him once after their stormy parting, but nothing had come of that. She stopped near him, feeling herself growing cold and pale, but he only said civilly, 'Good-evening, Lizzie,' and passed on.

Things had been like this about six months. Ellen was mar-

ried and away, and Lizzie's efforts to fill that practical manager's place were altogether useless. Mrs. Yardley had been very proud of Lizzie when she was at her best, but she was not very tender of her now, because Ellen's absence left the domestic burden heavy at the cottage, and the mother was wont to declare consequently, careless who heard her, that it was easier to do things twice over than to watch Lizzie muddling at them.

Mrs. Yardley did not mean to be unkind. She loved her younger daughter as much as ever, but she was one of those not very uncommon people whose firmament will admit of only one star at a time, and who glorify the rising or risen orb at the cost of every other claimant to interest or affection.

Ellen, the ugly duckling, the good little household drudge, had surprised the author of her being by doing unexpectedly well for herself, and the author incontinently began to trumpet the fine qualities that insured her daughter's success. Ellen was a girl worth harbouring; she made home homelike, it was no wonder a clever, steady man wanted to marry her; that was a different thing from being an idle doll.

Mrs. Yardley meant no harm; it was her way to gird habitually at somebody, but to the erst petted darling the change was inexplicable and cruel.

Lizzie was sitting by the hearth one evening when Mrs. Yardley came in from marketing. The latter was unusually silent, and there was a certain frosty rebuke in her aspect.

'You don't seem to have broken John Gavin's heart after all,' she began at last.

'I did not think I had,' Lizzie answered gravely.

'He is going to marry Lily Rodgers!'

Lizzie kept her eyes on the knitting in her hand. 'I hope she will make him a good wife,' she said.

'You take it mighty easy,' Mrs. Yardley snapped; 'the best match in the parish, steady as a judge, and never out of work for a day.'

Lizzie did not answer.

'Well, I don't take it easy,' the mother went on. She wanted the incentive of verbal contradiction, but, failing that, was quite equal to beating herself into a rage. 'To think that you had him in your offer ten times over, and that you have let him go to a useless trollop like that! Well, since he is such a fool as to marry the like of her, I am glad you missed him.'

Lizzie was not glad, but she did not say so.

That very evening Lily Rodgers called at the cottage, as if desiring congratulations.

'It seems you are to marry John Gavin,' Mrs. Yardley said, in a tone that was anything but cordial.

Lily laughed and blushed. 'You did not think that two girls would be silly enough to refuse him?' she answered.

'Well, I hope it will be a suitable match,' the mother said, in a tone that implied expectation of the very reverse.

Lily gave a little sigh. 'People have to take their chance,' she said; 'they say marriage is a lottery any way;' and after a while, smiling at both Mrs. Yardley and Lizzie rather sadly, the girl took her leave. It seemed to Lizzie that contact with her old lover had sobered and improved even Lily.

Next day Lizzie met John again, and this time she stopped him.

'I hear you are to marry Lily Rodgers,' she said, and she spoke bravely and brightly. At all costs she wanted to talk the thing over with him and have done with it.

'Well, yes, I suppose so.'

'Soon?'

'The time is not fixed yet.'

'I hope you will be very happy together.'

'I suppose we'll get on as well as other people. I had different ideas once, but I suppose what is best.'

'I suppose it is, and yet I don't know. At any rate, I hope it will be best for you.'

Lizzie knew then that it was not Willie Hewlett she had loved.

Weeks passed and spring was all over the land, the trees were in leaf, the fields were shooting up delicate tongues of verdure, and Mrs. Yardley's cottage was slowly resuming its early aspect of brightness and order. Lizzie had recently taken up domestic work with intensity, and the void in her heart seemed to ache less. It is so in many lives; happiness drops out or is flung aside, and after a vacant, amazed pause, we let duty bridge over the chasm it has left.

There was more grit in Lizzie than her enemies had imagined. After the thunderbolt of discovery that she, the disdainful, craved the man she had flouted, was quite ill with longing for the protection his affection had, all unsuspected, afforded her, she rose to her feet again prepared to walk the remaining leagues of life steadily and patiently. 'It is given to few people to be happy, but it is always possible to try to be good,' she thought.

John was to be married in June, people said, and it was April now.

Lizzie sat by the little front window looking out on the budding mallows. It was in her mind that they might be thinned by-and-by, and a few roses planted among them. It was a still kind of day, and the voices of the sparrows in the eaves and of the rooks among the elms sounded loud, while the kettle sang on the hearth and the cat purred as it dozed on a fold of her gown. Everything was as peaceful as a dream, when suddenly, as in a dream, an incongruous figure entered tumultuously.

A hand was laid on the garden latch, an excited figure came unsteadily up the narrow path between the mallows, the door was thrown open, and Lily Rodgers stood on the threshold—Lily, with a white, horrified face, and hair shaken about her shoulders with running.

‘John!’ she gasped, ‘John!’

‘Yes.’ Lizzie seemed to have expected this moment always, to have known always that some dire misfortune was coming. She rose and mechanically laid her work aside and looked at the bearer of evil tidings.

‘Is he dead?’

‘No, only hurt, but it’s nearly as bad. He is blind.’

‘How did it happen?’

‘He was at the limestone quarry. You know he is getting his house built, and the men were blasting the stones, and——’

Lizzie waited to hear no more, she snatched her shawl from the pin where it hung by the wall, and darted through the door down the path, across the meadow, and on to the house where his mother lived. They were sure to have taken him there.

‘Blind! blind! blind!’ she sobbed as she flew along. ‘Never able to see the face of friend, or sweetheart, or wife. Blind! Could it be worse to have died?’

But there was no excited crowd in Mrs. Gavin’s cottage as she opened the door; the house was still with a dreadful kind of stillness, and empty save for the wounded man who sat by the table, his bandaged eyes resting on his folded arms.

‘John!’ the girl said huskily.

‘Who is it?’ he asked in a low voice.

‘It’s me, John—Lizzie Yardley. Is this dreadful thing true that Lily says? Have you lost your sight?’

‘I can see no more than a stone,’ he said dully.

She gave a cry at that. 'Oh, John, dear John!' she said in an agonised voice.

'Hush! don't let it grieve you; it's a shame to make you cry, Lizzie.'

'Is there anything I can do?'

'You are good to ask that. Lily did not ask it. She ran away.'

'I suppose she could not bear to stand by?'

'You must not mind so much, Lizzie. It might have been worse.'

'Could anything be worse?' she asked in a sick whisper.

At that he raised himself and spoke bravely. 'Many things might have been worse. Just think if I'd been married!'

'How could that make any difference?' was the dreary answer.

'A blind man, who has a wife dependent on him, is in a terrible strait.'

'I don't think the wife would ever think of herself if she loved him.'

'Lily never loved me,' he said slowly.

'Oh yes, John; don't begin to think hard things, now. She loves you—will marry you, just the same; she is strong and faithful.'

'And I will learn to plait straw and knit stockings. You mean well, Lizzie; but to me there is no comfort in foolish talk of that sort. As to Lily, I never cared for her; I never asked her to be my wife.'

'But you said you supposed so when I asked you was it true.'

'Because I thought you should have known better. I never loved anybody but you. I have never been able to put anybody in your place.'

The girl began to cry in a tired, passionless sort of way.

'I wish you would not,' he said huskily. 'I can't bear you to be in trouble.'

'What does it matter about me? But you, John—your eyes! Oh, what shall we do?'

'Why, Lizzie, it would be enough if you had cared for me. Cheer up, and be thankful you are out of it all.'

'But I did care, John—I do,' she said, in a low broken voice.

He stretched out his hands tremulously, but drew them back instantly and pressed them on his bandaged eyes.

She went over then and stood beside him, leaning against his

shoulder, she felt so weak and weary. 'If it was not too late,' he said huskily.

'It is not too late, John. I don't think you understand what true love is if you think it grows anything but more and greater under misfortune. If you think you will be a little less unhappy with me than without me,' she faltered, sobbing, 'say so, and let me come and do all that love can to make your burden lighter.'

Then John, though not a profane person habitually, swore a great oath and snatched the bandage off his eyes and flung it on the floor.

Lizzie had been pale before, but she became ghastly now, for there was nothing of consequence the matter with John's eyes.

'How could you—how could you?' she said, with an exceedingly bitter cry.

Then John dropped on his knees beside her and took her in his arms. 'Lizzie, it was not a trick that I planned or thought out, as God is my witness. It was not in all my mind ten minutes before it happened. Let me tell you how it was. A few splints of rock were flung over me to-day at the quarry; it was not serious, though it might have been; but my eyes were filled with grit, and mother advised me not to go back to work till she fetched a wash for them from the doctor. I was sitting outside with a bandage shading them, when I saw Lily Rodgers crossing the field path. I didn't want to talk to her—one needs to be in good spirits to get on with Lily—so I drew the bandage down and turned my face away. It would have been far simpler to have done nothing of the kind. "Whatever is the matter with your eyes, John Gavin?" says she. "I got a hurt at the quarry," I said, "and mother has gone to the doctor's." She did not wait for one word more; she gave a cry and off she set like a madwoman, and then you came, and then—then—Lizzie, it was such a temptation to know if you cared a little bit. I never thought you would feel it so much. Say you forgive me, Lizzie—say you forgive me.'

'You seem to have put me to such bootless shame! Why, John, I have come here and have asked you to marry me,' she said, with a pale little smile.

'And do you think I shall ever forget that? Do you not think it has made me the gladdest, proudest man in all the world?'

'But if you ever talk about it——' Here she smiled a tremulous smile and held up a finger that still shook a little; and then John knew he was both loved and forgiven.

PUNCH'S PROTOTYPES.

Rooti-toot! Rooti-toot! Which of us can hear the magic notes of Punch's falsetto voice without an unconscious slackening of the step, and an involuntary turning of the head to catch a glimpse of that evergreen drama in which audacious vice invariably triumphs over feeble virtue, the majesty of the law is constantly set at naught, and even the devil meets with more than his match? Yet we have no reason to blush for the childishness of our tastes, since Punch and his fellow-puppets can boast of a pedigree more ancient, as well as more honourable, than that possessed by any players of larger growth. It has been said that the type and origin of the mechanical puppet, or marionette, is to be found in the first doll invented by the precocious maternal instinct of the first little girl. But M. Magnin, the highest modern authority on the subject, is of opinion that these little people owe their origin to the idol worshipped by the first little girl's papa. The primitive man, with that pathetic desire for a personal deity which is so deeply rooted in every human breast, made his god in his own image, and, in order to add reality to the illusion, first painted the wooden figure, then dressed him, and, lastly, sought to give him the movements as well as the appearance of life by means of mechanical contrivances.

M. Magnin's theory gains in probability when we find that in almost every country and every age marionettes have passed through three stages of development. In the first they appear as sacred images in the temple or the church, in the second as the toys of the aristocracy, in the third as the playthings of the people. This process took place in ancient Greece and Rome, as well as in all the principal countries of Christian Europe.

The *statuaire mobile* of the Grecian temples expressed their approval, or the reverse, of projects that were submitted to them by movements of the head or body, and when carried on the shoulders of the priests they were believed to indicate to their bearers the route they desired to take. With the rise of the great sculptors, however, who created marble statues that seemed to live and breathe and almost speak, the mechanical figures were degraded from their holy office, and entered upon the first stage

of their secular career, when they were the favourites of the rich, at whose banquets they performed, and when distinguished scientists, such as Eudoxus and Archytas, did not disdain to lend their minds to the improvement of the mechanism by which the puppets were worked. It is no wonder, therefore, as we learn from allusions in contemporary writers, that great perfection should have been attained in the construction of the Grecian marionettes, whose attractions, moreover, did not consist only of physical feats, since they delighted their audiences with jokes, satires, political hits, and topical allusions, the showman's voice being altered and disguised by little metal instruments, the fore-runners of the pipes used by Punch's showman to this day. So popular did public puppet-shows become at length that in the decadence of Greek dramatic art a famous showman was allowed to exhibit his little players in the theatre of Bacchus, where the great actors of earlier days had performed the tragedies of Euripides.

In the temples of ancient Rome we meet with the mechanical statues again, which, no doubt, the priestly wire-pullers found extremely useful inventions. Titus Livius describes the terror of the Senate and the people on hearing that, on some festal occasion, the gods had turned away their heads from the sacrifices offered to them. Among the Romans there seems to have been scarcely so keen a taste for puppet-shows as among the Greeks, yet under the empire such entertainments must have been common enough, judging from the many allusions to these mimic dramas in the works of poets and philosophers. The sight of these little manikins obeying every impulse of the threads held by an invisible hand, speaking the words inspired by one dominant mind, suggested to Marcus Aurelius, Horace, and many other writers, numerous appropriate, if rather obvious, reflections. One striking proof of our modern Punch's lineal descent from these classical puppets is to be found in the fact that the buffoons of the Greek and Roman marionette theatres were usually dressed in parti-coloured attire, and were distinguished by humps, big noses, and other features which are shared by the hero of the latter-day English puppet-show.

It is somewhat curious that although, on the rise of Christianity in Rome, the theatres and public games were anathematised by the early fathers of the Church, the performances of the marionettes were countenanced, or at least left unmolested. Indeed, it was

not long before the Church, on the principle, no doubt, that it is a pity to allow the devil to monopolise all the best amusements, began to make use of mechanical figures and the showman's art to attract the people to her ceremonies, and to strengthen their faith in her miracles. The *statuaire mobile* of the pagan temples now reappears in the little movable figures of the Virgin Mary (hence the derivation of the word *marionette*), of Christ, and of the saints.

In spite of the favour with which these mechanical toys were regarded by the Church, the manufacture of them was a rather dangerous trade, since an exceptionally skilful mechanic laid himself open to charges of sorcery and magic. The talents of the famous mathematician Torriani, who beguiled the monastic seclusion of Charles V. with representations of miniature battles, wherein the wooden soldiers blew trumpets, beat drums, and overthrew each other in most realistic fashion, roused strong suspicions of magic in the mind of the superior of the convent.

The first modern Italian writer who alludes to the public performances of marionettes is the learned doctor Jerome Cardan, who was born at Pavia in 1501. He speaks with positive enthusiasm of the perfection to which the art of working the little figures had then been brought, how by the pulling of a single string they could be made to play, fight, hunt, dance, blow trumpets, and cook 'very artistically.' Judging from sixteenth-century pictures and descriptions, the popular puppet-shows of those days differed but little from the performances that may be witnessed on the piazza of any Italian city in our own time. There was the little portable stage, or *cast Uetto*, on which the *burattini* of Florence and Rome, and the *fantoccini* of Naples, played their mimic parts. The latter city was the birthplace of the hero of the modern street drama, Pulcinella—so named, it is said, from the hen chicken whose cry his voice is supposed to resemble. The Neapolitan Pulcinella was by no means such a monster of iniquity as our English Punch. He seems to have been nothing worse than a pleasure-loving, quick-witted, irresponsible scamp, of the 'nobody's enemy but his own' type.

It is curious to notice the ready adaptability with which Pulcinella alters, adapts, or modifies his character and habits to suit the taste of the country in which he finds himself. In Spain, for example, he becomes Don Pulchinello, and he and his fellow-puppets act dramas, in which Moors, Indians, giants, and en-

chanters play conspicuous parts, while in the marionette theatres patronised by the upper classes the bull-fight is naturally the favourite spectacle. In Germany Pulcinella becomes Hanswurst, a buffoon whose distinguishing features are a heavy wit and a gluttonous appetite. The German puppets represented chiefly mysteries and miracle plays (in which Hanswurst was accustomed to chaff our first parents upon their fall, and to condole with Noah upon the 'hazy weather') until the sixteenth century, when the metaphysical controversy came into fashion. Then the crowds, even at the fairs, had no eyes or ears for anything but the prodigious history of Doctor Faustus, the echo and *résumé* of the tales of sorcery so common in the middle ages, and above all of the legends concerning the magician Virgilius and his clerk Theophilus. It may be remarked in this connection that the child Goethe's favourite toy was a marionette theatre, by means of which, no doubt, he learnt something of the necessities of the stage and the technicalities of dramatic art. The lasting impression which the darling amusement of his childhood left upon the poet is proved by the vivid description of a marionette theatre and the mechanism of the little actors which is contained in 'Wilhelm Meister,' and still more by the fact that his greatest drama is founded upon the story of Doctor Faustus, which, for the best part of two centuries, had been one of the most popular pieces in the puppet *répertoire*. Goethe was not by any means the only great German who patronised the puppet-show. The music-loving Prince Nicolas Esterhazy, Haydn's generous patron, maintained a marionette theatre at his Castle of Eisenstadt, which, for the perfection of its mechanism, scenery, and decorations, is said to have been one of the best that has ever existed. For this theatre Haydn himself tells us that he composed no less than five operettas. It has been suggested that the composer's well-known toy-symphony may have been written as an overture to one of these miniature operatic performances.

In France, as in other countries, the marionettes began their career as actors in ecclesiastical ceremonies; but, on being expelled from their sacred quarters, they found a home at the great annual fairs of St. Laurent and St. Germain. The first use of the word 'marionette' (in the sense of a popular show) occurs in a book of stories by G. Bouchet, which appeared in 1584; but neither Polichinelle nor Dame Gigogne seem to have established themselves upon the boards of the puppet-stage before 1649, though

living representatives of both characters had long been popular. Pulcinella, transformed into Polichinelle, becomes a typical little Frenchman of the Gascon type, boastful, jovial, and vivacious. The *répertoire* of puppet plays performed at the fairs seems to have been of a highly ambitious character, such pieces as 'Le Ravissement d'Hélène,' 'L'Enlèvement de Proserpine,' and even a parody of Molière's 'Médecin Malgré Lui' being favourites with the public. Such writers as Favart, Piron, and Lesage did not disdain to devote their talents to the service of the marionette theatre, which gradually became a permanent feature of the Boulevards. The puppets were also welcome guests in both aristocratic and literary circles. Even at Cirey we find them performing before M. Voltaire and the intellectual Madame du Chatelet. Madame de Graffigny, while staying at Cirey in 1738, writes to a friend that she has just been present at a performance of 'L'Enfant Prodigue' by a troupe of marionettes, which has made her die of laughing. Voltaire had solemnly declared that he was jealous of the little actors, and that their piece was very good. The lady is charmed to find that a great philosopher like Voltaire can appreciate such trifles, and observes that he is a good fellow as well as a sage. During the Reign of Terror Polichinelle, like so many of his betters, experienced sad reverses, for a miniature guillotine was set up by the side of the real guillotine, and there, while aristocratic heads were falling beneath the knife, Polichinelle was executed with all solemnity, and we are told that this melancholy sight attracted almost as much attention from the bloodthirsty crowd as the more realistic performance that was taking place in the immediate neighbourhood. This is probably the only occasion in his career of upwards of two centuries that Polichinelle has not got the better of his chronic enemy, the public executioner.

In England performing puppets, under various names, such as 'motions,' 'drolleries,' or 'mammets,' have formed so integral a part of the social life of the people that there is scarcely a poet from Chaucer to Byron, or a prose writer from Sir Philip Sidney to Hazlitt, but has made some allusion to them and to their entertainments. When the old miracle-plays were superseded by secular dramas in theatres of larger growth, they found a refuge on the stage of the marionettes, and an appreciative audience in the gaping crowds who thronged the fairs and markets. That popular character of the mystery-plays, 'the old vice who with dagger of lath cries ah, ha! to the devil,' was, judging from his behaviour

to the Evil One, the immediate forerunner of our modern Punch, Shakespeare, in common with most of his contemporaries, makes numerous allusions to the puppets. Hamlet remarks to Ophelia, 'I could interpret between you and your love if I could see the puppets dallying.' Speed (in 'Two Gentlemen of Verona'), referring to Valentine and his wooing of Silvia, exclaims, 'O excellent motion! O exceeding puppet! now will he interpret to her.' Autolycus (in 'Twelfth Night'), describing his own career, says, 'He hath been an ape-bearer; then a process-server, a bailiff; then he compassed a motion of the prodigal son.' It may be noted that this subject was the same that delighted Voltaire nearly two centuries later.

Though these references are numerous in Shakespeare's works, they are quite eclipsed in importance by the representation of a puppet-play which forms one of the scenes in Ben Jonson's 'Bartholomew Fair.' From this piece we gain an excellent idea of the nature of such a performance at the latter part of the sixteenth century. Lanthorn Leatherhead, the showman, boasts of the successful motions that he has given light to in his time. 'Jeruzalem was a stately thing, and so was Nineve, and the city of Norwich, and Sodom and Gomorrah . . . but the Gunpowder Plot, there was a get-penny! I have presented that to an eighteen or twenty-pence audience, nine times in an afternoon. Your home-born projects prove ever the best, they are so easy and familiar; they put too much learning in their things nowadays, and that, I fear, will be the spoil of this.' The 'motion' represented by Leatherhead's company consists of 'The ancient modern history of Hero and Leander, otherwise called the Touchstone of True Love, with as true a trial of friendship between Damon and Pythias.' The little players are taken out of the basket in which they live, to be introduced to Master Cokes, who asks the showman which is his Burbage, and which is his best actor, his Field. Cokes concludes his criticism of the troupe with the remark, 'Well, they are a civil company, I like 'em for that; they offer not to flee, nor jeer, nor break jests, as the great players do; and then, there goes not so much charge to the feasting of 'em, or making 'em drunk, as to the other, by reason of their littleness.' The puppet-play, in which the Hellespont is transformed into the Thames, Leander into a dyer's son about Puddle Wharf, and Hero into a wench of Bankside, goes forward in doggerel verse until it is interrupted by Zeal-of-the-Land Busy, a Puritan, who objects to stage-plays, and

looks upon wooden actors as heathenish idols. The puppet Dionysius is put up by his master to argue the question, and triumphantly confutes the Puritan, who declares his immediate conversion, and becomes a peaceable member of the audience.

Although the Puritans had so strong an objection to every kind of amusement, the marionette theatres were left unmolested in 1642, when all other places of entertainment were rigorously proscribed. A favourite piece during the prosperous years when the puppets enjoyed the monopoly of the dramatic stage was 'Paradise Lost,' and, curiously enough, we owe our knowledge of this fact to Milton's 'Areopagitica,' which appeared just twenty years before his own version of the drama of the 'Fall of Man.' After the Restoration, in spite of the renewed activity of poets and comedians, the puppets held their own, as is proved by the fact that in 1675 the company of Drury Lane Theatre, and that of the Duke of York's Theatre, petitioned the king to remove a puppet-show which was established in their neighbourhood, and the popularity of which was detrimental to their interests.

After the year 1688 the history of English marionettes concentrates itself upon the *répertoire* and personal characteristics of Punch. It has been generally believed that this distinguished character came over from Holland in the train of William of Orange; but M. Magnin, having discovered traces of his presence in England before the abdication of James II., is of opinion that the hero of modern marionettes came over from France with the Stuarts. Be that as it may, the lighter literature of the eighteenth century teems with allusions to Punch, who at that period was rather a light-hearted rake, like his French and Neapolitan kinsmen, than the brutal ruffian he has since become. During the early part of his career in this country Punch was considered to have certain characteristics in common with Bluebeard, Henry VIII., and Don Juan, while his attentions to other ladies were the ground of his perennial quarrel with Judy. It is a curious illustration of one phase of our national morality, that this side of Punch's character has been entirely suppressed, and that although we look on with equanimity while he violates the sixth commandment, we will not endure so much as a hint of a breach of the seventh.

Punch had certainly no reason to complain of any lack of homage paid him by the leading spirits of the eighteenth century. Addison, as a young man, wrote Latin verses about him, Swift

used him as one of the engines of his political satire, and Steele, in the 'Tatler,' got up a mock quarrel between Mr. Isaac Bickerstaff and George Powell, Punch's most famous showman. In the course of this quarrel, which is supposed to have been a parody of a controversy between Hoadly and Blackall, Bishop of Exeter, Mr. Bickerstaff declares that he knows the joiner who put Punch together, and that the hero's head had actually once been laid aside for a nut-cracker. Moreover, his scolding wife is but a bit of crab-tree, his courtiers were all taken out of a quick-set hedge near Islington, and Doctor Faustus himself is supposed to have learnt his whole art from an old woman whom he long served in the figure of a broom-staff. We learn from the same authority, however, that Mr. Powell's puppet-show was a formidable rival to the Italian opera, and that Punch's fascinations were strong enough to rob Nicolini of the feminine part of his audience. Fielding, it will be remembered, introduced Punch and his fellows into 'Tom Jones,' Hogarth caricatured them in 'Southwark Fair,' and Dr. Johnson, a constant patron of the puppet-show, declared that the wooden actors could play Shakespeare just as well as their colleagues of flesh and blood—a remark which he did not think fit to insert in his notes to Shakespeare's works. Curran, as a young man, was an amateur of marionettes, and on one occasion obtained permission from a showman to pull the strings that worked the figures, and to put words into their mouths. So well did he acquit himself of his task that the audience were in raptures, and the money collected was four times as much as usual. It is said that his success in finding retorts and arguments for his little clients showed Curran his true vocation, and led him to choose the bar for his profession.

Coming down to more recent times, a sonnet addressed to Punch, and beginning

Triumphant Punch ! with joy I follow thee
Through the glad progress of thy wanton course,

has been attributed to Byron, while, perhaps the last public honour paid to the popular favourite consisted of a series of brilliant illustrations of successive phases in Punch's career, drawn by George Cruickshank, the letterpress being contributed by the learned critic and annotator, Mr. Payne Collier. In our own days Punch may seem to have fallen somewhat from his high estate. Yet is not this so rather in appearance than in reality? For Punch's

followers now are recruited almost entirely from among the ranks of children, and it is generally allowed that children form the most faithful, the most sympathetic, and the least critical of audiences. Besides, in the children's world the fashions change but little, and the inhabitants play the same games, love the same toys, and listen to the same tales that have delighted the small people of countless ages. Therefore, as long as the race of children endures, or until babies are born *blasés* and cynical, Mr. Punch may confidently look forward to a long-continued career of audacious and successful villainy.

A FATAL RESERVATION

BY R. O. PROWSE.

AUTHOR OF 'THE POISON OF ASPS.'

BOOK IV.—Continued.

II.

[Written some days later.]

AMONGST his many kindnesses, Waveney has obtained permission for me to practise on the organ in the parish church sometimes. I generally go in the afternoon. It is a much larger organ than the one in the little church at home, and at first the number of stops gave me a good deal of trouble. But I have got used to them at last, and, after Waveney's visits, this is the greatest pleasure I have.

The church stands in a busy part of the town; it is very old, with old stained-glass windows, and its aisles feel still and restful after the jarring streets outside. It was early in the afternoon when I last went there, and the sun, coming slantingly through the window opposite the organ seat, covered the stone pavement with a stream of many-tinted light, various and wonderful as the colours of the ancient glass. The topmost rays presently stole up the organ's side, till they coloured all the place where I was sitting and bathed me in a shower of quivering hues. They even glanced upon the open book, making it difficult for me to read the music. I played, I remember, several of my favourite things, and the sound rolled through the old church, down the shadows of its paved aisles, through the intricacies of the high oak roof, beating against the mullioned windows in waves as of a prisoned sea; then checked, hushed, and, as it were, lulled to rest in a flow of liquid melody. Happening by-and-by to see the music of 'Angels ever bright and fair,' I began to sing, or rather hum, it *pianissimo*—as I fancied, for I may have ended by singing louder than when I began. As the last notes died away, I was startled by hearing what sounded like a sob come from a seat just behind me. I continued, however, to play for a moment or two, but as I turned

to reach another sheet of music, I saw that some one was sitting on the bench beneath the window, and though his head was buried in his hands, I knew that it was Waveney.

I rose and went to him. He looked up, and I could see tears in his eyes. The thought of this trouble of his at once came into my mind. He said they had told him at home that I had gone to the church, and so he had followed me.

'Waveney,' I said, laying my hand on his arm, 'there is something the matter. You know you have some trouble you are keeping from me. . . . Don't keep it from me any longer, dear. Tell me what it is.'

He fixed his eyes upon me, and looked steadily in my face. I could see that a struggle was warring within him. But with a poor attempt at a smile he answered, 'No, Maggie, no. There is—there is nothing the matter of any consequence. It was only that as you sang, your soul seemed to pass into the words, and it set the blood listening in my frame and my heart quivering like a flame, as the poet says. I couldn't pay you a better compliment, could I?'

He tried to speak lightly, and yet the words seemed to die away mournfully, while, as it were, they were still on his lips. I felt more convinced than ever that he was suffering from this trouble which he was keeping from me. But what could I do? I could not compel him to give me his confidence. After a minute or two of silence, I offered to play again.

'No, Maggie, no,' he said. 'Not again; I couldn't stand it.'

So I told the blower that I had no further need of his services, and came back and sat down beside Waveney.

He was leaning forward with his head in his hands as when I first saw him. The sun had gone in, and the colours had faded from the organ; the empty aisles began to look dreary in the failing light. Without the sun the church was cold, and the air had the heavy damp slightly acrid smell peculiar to ill-aired buildings. Waveney sat for some time without moving; when at last he raised his face and turned to me, I was startled to see that he was as white as the stones at our feet.

'Maggie,' he said, 'Maggie, suppose some one had wronged you—had wronged and deceived you—some one you were fond of; would you find it hard to forgive him, do you think?'

The colour mounted to my cheeks—I felt a kind of pleasure; I knew that he was going to give up his unhappy secret at last.

'If anyone deceived me whom I was fond of, I would try to forgive him. But—but if it was some one I loved very much . . . and he deceived me, I believe, dear—well, it would just break my heart.'

Waveney started from the seat as if I had struck him. 'Come,' he said hurriedly, turning from me as he spoke, 'let us go. I have had enough of this.'

I picked up the music I had brought with me, and was just starting to follow him, when I found I had forgotten my gloves, which I had left on the organ seat. I called to Waveney to wait for me, but he took no notice, and had gone some little distance down the street before I overtook him. We walked on for some time in silence.

'Where are we going, dear?' I asked presently, for he had wandered into streets that were new to me; and as he did not hear, I repeated my question.

'Where are we going?' he echoed, 'I don't know. But I know this, we are going a very dangerous road.' Then I heard him mutter to himself, 'A road, by heaven! by which there is no returning.'

His manner shocked me. I had seen nothing like it in him before. He has often been out of spirits of late, but never so strangely violent. And I felt I was powerless to help him. After what had passed in the church, it was impossible to obtrude upon his confidence again. That his trouble was in some way due to a wrong he had received from some one dear to him I had no doubt; but nothing he had said gave me any clue to what the wrong could be, or to the person who had been guilty of it. So I just laid my hand within his arm, that he might feel that my sympathy was with him, and we walked on in silence.

How long we had been walking I cannot tell. That part of the town was strange to me, and I was so much occupied with my thoughts that I took little notice of anything else. When I did return to outer consciousness, I found that it was nearly dark, and that we were evidently on the outskirts of Smeltington. I was on the point of telling Waveney that we ought to go back, when, as we turned the corner of the road, I saw, not twenty yards before us, the canal.

In an instant my old strange feeling of apprehension seized me. It is impossible to put it into words, but as far as I can analyse it at all, it is, as I have said, a kind of feeling as if that

slow black water were *waiting*. It must have been my poor girl's story that gave me the idea; it is stupid of me not to get rid of it.

'I think we ought to go back now,' I said. 'See how dark it is. My father will be wanting his tea. Let us take the nearest way, and would you mind walking a little quicker, dear?' I turned round as I spoke.

'No, by the canal is the nearest way,' he said; and, as he moved on, I of course followed him. At another time I should have been vexed that our road lay this way; but I had never seen the canal except by daylight, and in spite of my inexplicable feeling of apprehension, a strange curiosity was upon me to see what it looked like in the dark.

The canal appeared to form a kind of irregular boundary to that part of Smeltington. On our side there were houses for nearly the whole of the first half-mile, sometimes in streets ending at right angles to the water, sometimes in rows running parallel to it, with little gardens that extended to the edge of the towing-path. But on the other side stretched the open country with not a house to be seen. After about half-a-mile, when the houses had come to an end on our side as well, we walked beside a wide tract of market gardens and allotments, with only a stray cottage dotted about here and there, as we could see by the lights.

It was quite dark now, and singularly still. A faint murmur seemed to come from the distant streets, and I could hear a church bell ringing, from which I knew how late it was; but these were the only sounds, except the occasional splash of a water-rat darting under the bank beneath us. A barge passed, and the man with the horse wished Waveney good evening; but otherwise we met no one in the length of our walk. It had clouded over since sunset, so that no stars were visible, but the reflection of the furnaces in the ironworks glared brightly overhead.

The water did look very black and very cruel—just as I have pictured it to myself when I have lain awake at night. Very black and cruel and cold it looked, flowing there so silently. A chill crept over me as I looked at it. And yet it had a weird fascination for me—an inexplicable fascination—a feeling as if all life, all the world, had become concentrated in those inky waters; as if they were in some way or other the very end and purpose of existence. But I cannot really explain what I felt. It was an eerie feeling no words can convey. It would be impossible by daylight. It was the result of the darkness and silence, and

perhaps of a certain excitement within me. I shudder now as I recall it.

Then I could not prevent my thoughts from wandering to my poor girl, and I began to wonder what her feelings must have been when she came to it that night. It was whilst I was thinking of this that I suddenly became conscious that Waveney, who had not spoken for some time, had come very close to me, and was peering into my face through the darkness. I turned to speak to him, but before I could utter a word I felt his arm round me, and the next instant he had drawn me to him, and putting his other arm round me too, kissed me on the forehead twice.

'My darling, my darling!' I heard him say, 'you are mine. You were given to me in childhood; you have been restored to me without my seeking; each time I have tried to alter things I have been frustrated. There is a power at work which it is useless—which I will attempt no longer to resist. I yield to it; I claim you in its name; only tell me, dearest, that I have your love.'

His voice was choked—his utterance so thick and rapid that his words were almost indistinguishable. To me all was confused; I heard as in a dream. I merely answered—

'You have it, dearest Waveney; you have it. It has been yours—always.'

'And shall be mine to the end,' he murmured, pressing me yet closer to him. He spoke other words, but they made no distinct impression upon my mind.

I can give but a poor account of the rest of the walk. The remembrance of it lingers in my mind as the memory of one precious blissful moment. We said very little; indeed, I am not sure that we spoke at all. But I know I was happier than I had ever been before in my life. At the door of our house we parted, Waveney having refused to come in. When I reached my own room, I fell on my knees and opened my heart to God, for the prayer of my life was answered.

How I spent the evening I do not know. I believe I was idle enough to do nothing till bed-time but sit and look into the fire. I gave myself up to living in my great happiness. I did one thing which, I suppose, was very silly. I took a bracelet (a plain gold band set with a single diamond), which Waveney gave me years ago, out of its cotton-wool, and wore it till the next morning.

It seemed sad that I could not go to my poor father in my

happiness and tell him of it, and make him share it. But he sat on the other side of the hearth looking vacantly into the fire, nursing a cat that belongs to the landlady and to which he seems to have become curiously attached, and I knew I could do nothing to help him to understand. At last, however, the longing for his sympathy—for his sanction of what I had done—was too great for me. I went to his chair, and kneeling beside him, took one of his hands in mine, and fixing my eyes steadily on his, said very slowly—

‘Father dear, Waveney loves me. He has told me so this afternoon.’

To my delight, a look of comprehension came into his face.

‘I know. Waveney loves you. I know it. He loves you. But he is married.’

‘Married, father? No; he is not married. How could he tell me he loved me if he were married? He is not married. What makes you think he is, dear?’

He looked at me a moment. The intelligence was ebbing from his face.

‘The——’ he murmured—I could not catch the word.

‘The what, father dearest?’ I asked, putting my ear near his lips.

‘The—the paper.’

This answer was quite unintelligible to me.

‘The paper? What paper, dear? The newspaper?’ I hazarded.

But he did not understand me. He was looking at the cat he was stroking and took no further notice of me, nor could I get another word from him.

About ten o’clock he got up as usual, and went to bed. He always goes to bed about the same time, and always of his own accord. I have never known him to stay beyond a quarter past ten. I light his candle and see him as far as his room, but he never wishes me good night—never seems to know that I am with him. Yet he can still dress and undress himself without difficulty. Nevertheless I take the precaution of opening his door on my way to bed to see that he has put out the light.

For some time after he had left me I continued to wonder about the ‘paper.’ But to no purpose. I could find no explanation. And I think my thoughts at last strayed back in the old direction. An event, however, that has since occurred has

suggested to me a possible explanation. I have a vague recollection of having once read in a newspaper something about a Lady Keyworth. Now, if my memory does not play me false, I believe I read it on the very morning we left London, and that when I spoke of it to my father he then made some remark about Waveney's being married and this Lady Keyworth's being probably his wife. And it may be that subsequent events, which have wholly driven this circumstance from my mind, have served, on the other hand, to impress it upon my father's. I must have told him about this Lady Keyworth only a few minutes before Gilbert came into our room. It would thus have been the last impression on his mind before he received the fatal shock.

III.

There are one or two things which Waveney has told me that I have forgotten to mention.

The first is that Gilbert has returned to England. An illness of many phases followed his accident. I think the doctors never quite gave him up, but I know that for a long time his life was measured by hours. They were afraid he would lose his reason, even if he recovered physically. Their fears in this respect, however, have proved to be groundless, for after having been abroad all the winter he is now supposed to be returning home with his health restored in every way.

When Waveney told me this it did not make as much impression upon me as it would have made at any other time, because my mind was full of something else. But I have since thought it over, and it now makes me anxious. Waveney, who is my sole informant about Gilbert, says that, so far as he knows, Gilbert has told no one the particulars of his accident, the general belief amongst his friends being that he somehow met with it in the street. Nor does Waveney think he has communicated with the police. But what steps may he not take now? It will be impossible for him to trace us here, and Waveney assures me that he shall not learn our whereabouts from him. And yet I cannot help feeling anxious. By what a strange chance (if chance it were) he found us before! Supposing he should find us again! I dare not think of it.

This has reminded me of Mr. Job. It was an inspiration of Waveney's to take him away into the country. Waveney went to

Burders Street a few hours after we had left it, and found Mr. Job much distressed at our loss, and at the prospect of having to give up his shop. While they were talking Mr. Job happened to mention that he had once lived in the country, whereupon it occurred to Waveney to offer him a cottage, with a situation for Tommy at the Court. Mr. Job accepted the offer, and Waveney has put him into a cottage next door to old Edwards, while work has been found for Tommy under one of the gardeners. The two old men, it appears, have become great friends. Waveney, of course, impressed upon Mr. Job the necessity for discretion with regard to us, and he tells me that both Mr. Job and the boy have shown themselves models of prudence.

The only friend I have made in Smeltington is a Mrs. Latimer. She lived in this road when we first came here, but has since moved to another part of the town. She is a tall, slender, middle-aged woman, with iron-grey hair, strong features that must once have been handsome, and curious alternations from vivacity to preoccupation in her manner. She attends the church to which I go, is a district visitor, and takes a class in the Sunday-school. But she evidently cares for none of these things; she seldom mentions them, and when she does, speaks of them as if they were a penance she is compelling herself to perform. She has travelled, and has seen an immense deal of the world; and when she rouses herself and throws off the indifferent pre-occupied air which rather spoils her manner, talks well, with a kind of half-foreign animation.

I must admit I feel a little afraid of her. She has very dark eyes which, in spite of the tired look that is often in them, have a wonderful play of expression; positive and shrewd enough at most times, she is a woman full of strange fancies, and can only half conceal the interest she takes in all sorts of unwholesome experiences. She is not an exacting person, and is much too cynical to be easily offended, but I never feel quite at home with her. I know nothing of her history beyond the fact that she has been married twice. From something she once said I imagine her second husband to be still alive. She speaks bitterly of men.

I mention Mrs. Latimer at this length because, though I can never make up my mind whether I like her, she appeals to my imagination; there is something elusive and impenetrable about her; I find myself wondering what she is thinking about when she is not talking, and I feel that I never know. I mention her,

too, because it was on the occasion of my last visit to her that the occurrence took place which has suggested the possible explanation of my father's remark about the paper.

As I turned into the street in which Mrs. Latimer lives, a carriage passed which Mrs. Latimer herself has pointed out to me as Mrs. Nixon's, and in the carriage were Mrs. Nixon and a lady younger than herself. I had seen Mrs. Nixon before—she is often in Smeltington—and I fancied I had seen her companion too. At all events, I think I should have taken no particular notice of them had I not heard a person who was passing me at the time say to the woman who was with her, 'That's Lady Keyworth,' nodding as she spoke in the direction of the carriage.

In a moment the recollection of the Lady Keyworth I had once read about flashed into my mind. I wondered at once: Can this be she? I don't know what strange feeling crept over me, but I determined, I remember, to ask Mrs. Latimer as soon as I got in whether she could tell me about her.

'Did you see Mrs. Nixon's carriage go by just now?' I inquired, when we had shaken hands, and Mrs. Latimer had told her servant to bring in the tea.

'Yes; that was her daughter with her. You have heard of Lady Keyworth?'

'I think I have seen her name in the paper.'

'Probably; well, that Lady Keyworth is the daughter Mrs. Nixon had with her. She is supposed, I believe, to be a beauty. Personally, I must confess her beauty does not appeal to me. I admit she has a look of the *grande dame*, but it's the *grande dame* of the end of the nineteenth century. One feels that she owes her success as much to democracy as—just as much as Mr. Bothamley, for instance. It is a success made by the journalist and the photographer.'

I said that though I thought Lady Keyworth was handsome, exceptionally handsome, the expression of her face had not prepossessed me in her favour.

Mrs. Latimer smiled. 'To my mind there is something a little spurious about these Juno-like women. One feels that they ought to play a part in some way to correspond with their faces. When I see a woman with a handsome classical face amongst a number of fast, over-dressed people, say on a drag at Ascot, she always makes me feel that she is something of an impostor.'

'Is Lady Keyworth fast?'

'I have not heard that she is. They say she is seldom with her husband, but that doesn't go for much. I really know nothing about her.'

'You don't know who her husband is?'

'I can't tell you. I haven't a Burke or a Debrett, or we would look him out. I am afraid I was never so well up in my peerage—what is it, dear? What's the matter? Tell me. Ah, I see,' she added, coming to my side; 'you are faint.'

I don't know why it was: I am not given to fainting, but just then a curious weakness came over me, and I seemed to be sinking down through my chair. It was very stupid, and I felt very much ashamed of myself; but Mrs. Latimer was kind, and I am glad to say it was soon over. I suppose, to be honest, I do know what it was that affected me, but, disturbing as the thought might be, it was absurd to be betrayed into making a scene. Lady Keyworth's name was not mentioned by us again, and it was not until I returned home that the explanation of my father's remark about the paper suggested itself to me as I have given it.

Still, my little display of weakness had one excellent result. It brought me nearer to Mrs. Latimer. She had hitherto shown as little disposition to offer sympathy as to seek it; and as I could not have told her our story, I had been glad to find her as free from curiosity as she is. This afternoon, however, her reserve yielded a little, and I saw the nature of this strange woman in a different light.

'You and I should be good friends,' she said; 'it is sorrow which makes true friendship.' I have told her of my poor father's affliction. 'One forgets one has a heart, one seems to have so little use for it. I had one once—and it's to that I owe half my troubles. At least,' she smiled in a curious way, 'it is a satisfaction to think so.'

I tried to say something sympathetic.

Mrs. Latimer laughed. 'I was not making a bid for your sympathy,' she checked me. 'I should be taking it under false pretences. I understand—I know. I know you have the kindest heart in the world, but still my troubles, if you knew them, are not of a kind you could sympathise with. And you would be quite right not to sympathise with them. I have no wish to pose. The sinning—and it is by no means too strong a word for it—has been nearly all on my side. But still,' she added, 'one wishes sometimes there were a statute of limitation for one's memories.'

There are moments when one almost thinks one has suffered enough,—enough even for atonement, I mean.'

She looked old, old and worn, as she said it, and there was a drawn expression about her mouth it was painful to see. I felt that at last the real woman was before me; I realised that hitherto our intercourse had lain wholly on the surface. I divined that these memories, whatever they were, made the perpetual subject of her thought.

I can write no more. My father has been taken very ill, and the doctor, who has just left, tells me that he fears there is not much hope—at least, that I should be prepared for the worst. I made him tell me the truth.

I have written to Waveney to ask him to come at once. It is a fortnight since that afternoon he joined me in the church, and I have not seen nor heard from him since. Everything has grown confused. That afternoon seems to me now like a dream. I sometimes wonder whether I could have mistaken his meaning. But I shall know all when he comes, and I cannot tell the relief it will be to have his sympathy and help.

My poor father! His life is so utterly sad that I almost think, if it is not unnatural to say it, it would be happier for him if he were not spared. How thankful I am now that I can feel sure of his innocence! That awful doubt hung over me for years. Thank God! it has been removed.

If only he had not come to me so late!

The end of Miss Leigh's narrative.

BOOK V.

CHAPTER I.

Quousque, Domine?

FREE, happy Smeltington had settled to work for the afternoon. The straight chimneys were rolling out their folds of rich black smoke; the machinery was in full roar and din; the steam-worked wheels were whirling their merriest; the steam hammers were rising and falling with their precise omnipotence, and in that Cyclopean region none, we may be certain, moved more surely than those by which the power of that social and political Vulcan, Mr. Bothamley, was being continually forged. Pleasantly shone

the afternoon sun on Bushby Hill, and approvingly smiled its mansions. Upon what progress, what wealth, what freedom, what happiness did they not look down! Smeltington might well quote itself as a triumph of enterprise and prosperity. For what wealth with such a suburb as Bushby Hill! What progress with those omnipotent engines! What happiness to vote for Mr. Bothamley!

But it is not with the roar and the din that we have to do, nevertheless. No; our business takes us away from the whirl and clang of the works, and even from the seething streets, to a modest road, and to a house where lay a man whose life's work was awaiting its last stroke from the finishing hand of death. Maggie sat by her father's side. His eyes were upon her, but they had no recognition in them. Her hand stroked one of his as it lay on the counterpane. Very pale and very worn she looked; there were heavy circles under her blue eyes, and a patient weariness in her face that told of 'the hope and the fear and the sorrow.'

By-and-by there was a knock at the door. She rose and opened it. It was the doctor who came in, and after a few whispered words, she left him with her father, and went downstairs. On the way she met the landlady, who told her that Waveney was waiting in the sitting-room below.

It was a sad meeting. Waveney looked scarcely less worn than she. There was a constraint in his manner which at another time she would certainly have detected, but at that moment her mind was full of her trouble, and her only thought was one of thankfulness for his presence. He had come from the station, having just arrived from Waveney.

'It is good of you, dear, to come so soon,' she said—it was her letter, of course, that had brought him to Smeltington. 'I cannot tell you what a comfort it is to have you with me now.'

They were sitting together on the sofa.

'My poor father,' she went on, 'is still—still unconscious, but I think it is possible, and the doctor seems to think so too, that he may recover his memory, perhaps for a few hours, or perhaps only for a few minutes, before he—before he passes away, dear. Stray gleams of light seem to break into his poor dark thoughts from time to time.'

'Would you like me to see him?'

'The doctor is with him now. I will ask whether it would be advisable when he comes down.'

They were silent for some moments. The thoughts of both

were sad. Maggie's were full of her grief, and she would not have noticed the constraint in his manner, even if it had still been there. But it was not; it had left him; his manner showed only consideration and sympathy.

'It is for the best,' he said. 'I think it will be a happy release for him.'

'Yes, most people, I suppose, would say so.'

'And,' he added, gently, 'it is the only solution for you.'

'Ah, don't say that, dear. I cannot help feeling that it is happier and better that he should—should be taken, but I don't wish any selfish or heartless—'

'Surely you could not have given him more than you have given?'

She did not answer for a moment. 'He came to me too late,' she said. 'I had filled his place before he came.'

'I understand.'

'With your father. Your father had taken his place.'

'Still I think you have done enough,' he insisted, to encourage her.

'I have done what I could,' she said, quite simply.

They did not talk very much. The consciousness of the near approach of the great shadow was upon them, and in its presence their own private interests seemed irrelevant and almost profane. Maggie said none of the things she had meant to say; she left her questions unasked, his long (as it appeared to her) silence and withdrawal unaccounted for. For the present she found it enough merely to feel that he was with her. That very thought of her release which he had suggested made her reluctant to think just then of matters only concerning herself. And the perception that with her freedom a change must come in their relations added an unforeseen element of difficulty which helped too to keep her silent.

It was little help Waveney gave her. He murmured some few words of comfort, the kindest he could find; and then they fell into silence, sitting side by side as they would sometimes sit in the distant days of their childhood to listen to Sir George's old-world stories in the twilight by the library fire.

Presently the doctor came down to them. He had no more cheerful account to give of poor Leigh. He did not think it well that he should be disturbed just then, but said that Waveney might see him to-morrow. Perhaps he would call late in the

afternoon—or, better, in the evening. He told Waveney, who followed him into the passage, that the end was drawing very near.

It was late in the afternoon when Waveney reached the Oaks. Mrs. Nixon and Nora and May were at tea in the drawing-room. Mrs. Nixon received him pleasantly, with the easy greeting their relations permitted, and May with the heightening of the colour in her cheek which Waveney's appearance nowadays often tended to produce, he being over-much in the secrets of Arthur and herself.

With Nora things had not gone well since we last saw her. Waveney had become quite impossible. That invaluable patience and forbearance of his were all gone; the spirit of revolt had gained sadly upon the spirit of acceptance. His mere avoidance would not, perhaps, have distressed her very much, and, since he was good enough to avoid her, the depression of spirits from which he seemed constantly to be suffering need not have affected her own; but the consciousness of his antagonism to all she did sorely tried her, and he had begun to express his disapproval with a frequency her temper found hard to bear. He had come to occupy a place in her life not unlike that which had once been occupied by her mother. He was a certain restraint upon her actions, and invariably an unpleasant subject of thought.

It was in the affairs of the lovers, whose happiness he had in a measure taken into his keeping, that Waveney found the pretext for his unexpected—Nora had left him a week before, and it had not been arranged that he should follow her—appearance at the Oaks. Mrs. Nixon was not very curious to know what errand had brought him to Stokely, and Nora was not curious at all; but in the absence of more interesting matter for conversation, and partly, perhaps, because the usual trivialities jarred upon him rather just then, Waveney, with sly and friendly glances at May, entered upon the details of his mission. In the first place, he told them that he had secured a gentleman to fill the Waveney living—which had fallen conveniently vacant in the first days of the year—until such time as Arthur should be qualified to receive it. In the second place, he had come to urge, at Arthur's instigation, that as his uncle had so far relented as to cut him off with 300*l.* a year, instead of with the dreadful shilling he had expected, the marriage should not be postponed till Arthur entered upon his duties at Waveney, but should take place soon after his ordination and first settlement in his curacy.

Waveney pleaded the lovers' cause delicately and successfully; Mrs. Nixon gave an unpleasantly cheerful consent, and the whole thing was settled before the time came to dress for dinner. May lingered in the room after Nora and her mother had left it. Between Waveney and May a close friendship had existed since a certain evening which we dare say the reader has not forgotten. To-day his preoccupation did not escape her. She saw plainly enough that he had some trouble on his mind, and the best way of relieving it that occurred to her was to endeavour to divert his thoughts. 'I will make him talk,' she thought. Arthur, of course, was the subject upon which she herself was most anxious to talk; the subject upon which she found most difficulty in talking being, precisely, Arthur. She would make the effort, however—for Waveney's sake. Woman-like she approached her subject circuitously.

'Is Greek hard?' she asked.

'Is Greek hard?' Waveney repeated, surprised by the remoteness of the question. 'Yes, it is—very hard; at least, I think most people find it harder than Latin.' Then an idea occurred to him: he added, musingly, 'The Greek of the New Testament is not very hard. I suppose you were not thinking of that? No, you were speaking generally. Perhaps you have some thought of learning Greek yourself? Can I be of any assistance to you? Can I lend you a grammar?'

'Yes, I was thinking of the New Testament,' said May, innocently.

'Indeed! With any reference to an examination, may I ask?'

'No—yes.'

'Not for self?'

'No.'

'Possibly for partner?'

'I don't know what you mean. I don't belong to a firm. I was asking you about Greek. Perhaps you will kindly tell me——'

'Whether Arthur knows enough Greek and of other things to pass his bishop's examination? Of course he does; he took honours at Oxford. You may set your mind at rest about that. If you take my advice, you will lose no time in securing the services of Uncle James, and of some girls to be your brides——'

'Thank you. Have you any other advice to give? Uncle James is coming here to-morrow.'

'Ah! I shall be glad to see him.'

‘And Mr. Gilbert is coming with him.’

‘Gilbert coming with him!’ exclaimed Waveney, in consternation.

‘Yes. Why, Waveney, what is the matter?’

‘Nothing,’ he said, recovering himself. ‘All that is the matter, as far as I know, is that we shall keep dinner waiting if we stay here much longer.’

‘You may keep dinner waiting. It doesn’t take *me* long to dress,’ May retorted as he opened the door for her. But she wondered why he had been so much disturbed by the mention of Mr. Gilbert.

It was Nora who was responsible for that gentleman’s unseasonable visit. Her debt to him had given her another subject for disagreeable reflection. At one time it had caused her considerable uneasiness—for this reason. Among Mr. Gilbert’s papers there must certainly, she had thought, be some note or memorandum of the money he had lent her. Now, if he had died, or had permanently lost his reason, into whose hands would that memorandum have fallen? To what extent might she not have been compromised? Fortunately, of course, he had recovered and had returned to England, and the only question now was as to how the money was to be obtained to pay him.

During the past few months she had contrived, partly by unusual economy, and partly by increased importunity, to put something on one side for this purpose; and she hoped, if Mr. Gilbert would only wait another couple of months, to make up the rest of the sum out of the money which Waveney would give her to meet the expenses of the house in town. That Mr. Gilbert would be willing to wait she had very little doubt; but, much as she shrank from all reference to this transaction, she felt that it would be more satisfactory, and certainly more gracious, to see Mr. Gilbert personally, and ask his permission to remain a little longer in his debt. And in the promised visit of the Major, a man of a temperament needing a good deal of entertainment, she had found an excuse for persuading her mother to send Mr. Gilbert an invitation.

Waveney decided that he would leave the Oaks next day. Gilbert and he must meet sooner or later; if chance did not bring them together, it was probable that Gilbert himself would ensure their meeting. But Waveney was anxious to avoid him now. In a few hours, at the furthest, poor Leigh must have breathed his

last, and passed effectually beyond the reach of human malice and injustice. Then he would be free to do what a possibly excessive prudence had hitherto prevented him from doing: he would be free to use the information Maggie had obtained from her father, and enlighten Nora and her mother with regard to Gilbert's character and antecedents.

CHAPTER II.

I will not leave thee lonely with the dead.

WAVENEY accordingly left the Oaks the following afternoon, and had himself driven to the station. Here he left his portmanteau, and then walked to Leigh's lodgings. Whether he remained in Smeltington for the night, or went back to Waveney by the last train, must depend upon circumstances. It seemed probable that he would remain.

Maggie received him as usual in her little sitting-room. The cloth was on the table; she was pouring out for herself a cup of tea. Another night of watching and anxiety had deepened the lines of pain in her face. Even the sight of Waveney scarcely brightened it to-day. She did not notice that his face was only less worn than her own; for his night, too, had been sleepless—he, too, had passed it in the depths.

'The end is very near,' she said, keeping his hand within her own. 'The doctor has been this morning, and I expect him to come again by-and-by. He does not think my poor father can last many hours. You—you can wait with me a little while?'

'Till the end, dear, if it will be any comfort to you.'

'Yes, it will be a great comfort to me. There is something very—very awful in this waiting for death. I am very glad, dear, you were able to come.'

For a few moments neither spoke. The gathering tears stole over her cheek, but they brought a measure of relief. Her worn face was a shade brighter as she moved to her place at the table, and poured Waveney out some tea.

'I must leave you soon,' she said presently. 'The doctor will probably be here in another hour; and then, if he does not object, will you come upstairs?'

'Is he sensible?' he asked. 'Has he recovered his memory at all?'

She shook her head. 'No, not at present.'

'Do you think he will recover it before——?'

'I cannot tell; I hardly think so now.'

A little later she rose to return to her father.

'Will you stay here till the doctor comes?' she asked.

Waveney said that he would, and Maggie went from the room.

Left to his own thoughts, the minutes seemed to Waveney to pass like years. The sleeplessness of the previous night had told upon his nerves, and made them wretchedly unfit to bear the strain which the hourly-increasing difficulties of his position put upon them. The act of thinking had become acutely painful. Still a most momentous decision must be made before the next few hours were over. He had had months in which to make it, and yet the crisis, now that it had come at last, found him still unprepared. In a few hours—at the latest, in a few days—he must tell her of his marriage. Then how was he to act? There was one course which he had striven—and successfully—to justify to himself: would he make a last throw for happiness, and desperately take *that*?

The minutes seemed to him to pass like years, and every minute the throbbing of his overwrought nerves grew more acutely painful. There was a cheap alarum clock on the chimney-piece, and its loud rapid tick, made the more distressing by the deep quiet of the house, fretted him with its harsh persistence out of his self-control; as a way of escape, he determined to spend the rest of the time, till the doctor arrived, out of doors.

The darkness and the touch of the fresh night air came as an inexpressible relief to him. He sauntered slowly down the road, strolling mechanically to the station, which was but a few minutes' walk away. It was not till he found himself in the bustle due to the arrival of a train that he returned to full consciousness of his surroundings. The lights, the noise, the confusion were as welcome to him now as the darkness had been a few minutes before. There is some comfort in suffering in company, for solitude makes trouble harder to bear by intensifying our individuality; and about a station there is a vague suggestion of escape. And so Waveney went on to the platform, and was in time to see the departing train make a semicircle of light as it passed round a curve in the darkness.

He was still looking after it, when he heard himself addressed

from behind. He turned round, and saw that the person who had addressed him was Mr. Gilbert.

'This is an unexpected pleasure. How de do, Keyworth, how de do?' said Gilbert, shaking Waveney by the hand with a show of objectionable friendliness. 'Most unexpected pleasure. I am sure it is very good of you to come and meet—*me*, I must say, for the Major has not turned up.'

'No—how do you do?' stammered Waveney. 'No, I am afraid I——'

'Ah, I see,' laughed Gilbert, 'I have spoken too soon. I have claimed an attention which has not been paid me. Well, I suppose you are travelling yourself? You have not come by my train? No. I hope you did not intend to go on by it?'

'No,' said Waveney, 'that was not my train.' Adding hurriedly to prevent Gilbert's questions, 'I think you were not expected at the Oaks till later.'

'Indeed! Well, do you know, till I saw you I fancied there must be something wrong. In the first place, Major Nixon was to have met me in town and travelled down with me; but I have seen nothing of him. In the second, Mrs. Nixon has not sent her carriage, which the Major told me she had promised us. The Major said he intended to be present at a meeting this afternoon which was to be addressed by Mr. Bothamley—yes, you see, that's what it has come to: Bothamley has captured the Major. He chose the last train for this reason.'

'The last train? That accounts for it. This is not the last train. When is the last train from London due?' he asked, turning to a porter who had given Gilbert his services.

'Another hour and a half,' was the answer.

Gilbert understood his mistake. He had been under the impression that the train he had travelled by was the last.

'Well,' he said, after a moment's reflection, 'I tell you what I will do. I will leave my luggage here for the carriage, and if you are returning to the Oaks, will come with you.' And he turned to the porter to give the necessary instructions as he spoke.

'Stop,' Waveney interposed. 'I am not returning to the Oaks. I am——' What in the world should he say to the man? 'I am going on by a later train.'

'You can take the things all the same,' said Gilbert, speaking to the porter. 'They must wait for the carriage anyhow.' Then

turning to Waveney, whose hesitation had not escaped him, he said, 'May I ask when your train is due?'

Waveney saw that his position was to be made unpleasantly difficult. He had decided to spend the night in Smeltington. The last train for Waveney he knew to be due at that moment; about any other train he knew nothing. 'In about half an hour,' he answered at random, glancing nervously at the porter.

'You are going to town?'

'To town? Ah—yes, I am going to town,' he repeated. Where else should he say he was going? With the last train for Waveney already due, he could hardly say he was going there.

'The next up train is in fifty minutes,' volunteered the porter politely.

'Ah, yes, that's my train,' said Waveney indifferently.

Now of this Mr. Gilbert was an interested and curious observer. 'It is strange that he should not know which train he is going by,' he thought. Aloud he said, 'Well, Keyworth, I will stay and keep you company. It will be slow work for you waiting by yourself, and I may just as well drive up with the Major. Let us walk up and down, shall we?'

Waveney had no alternative but to consent. The other took his arm.

This excessive friendliness on Gilbert's part was the result of a policy, well considered and mature. He had not expected to meet Waveney at Smeltington, but he had determined how he would act towards him whenever they did meet. If possible, they were to remain friends. It might not be an easy matter to accomplish, since Waveney was probably in communication with the Leighs, but he had decided to chance it and try.

For the man beside him Waveney felt an overwhelming abhorrence. In the first embarrassment of the meeting his presence of mind had failed him, but each second that they paced the now deserted platform his grasp of the position grew firmer, and his disgust at finding himself linked arm-in-arm with such a man became more and more intense. With an angry movement he drew his arm away. It was for Leigh's sake only he endured his presence, as it had been for Leigh's sake he had remained silent yesterday, and had suffered those who had so strong a claim upon his consideration to continue in ignorance of Gilbert's history.

His main object now was to escape. It was not only necessary

that he should leave the station before the arrival of the London train, but he was anxious to return to Maggie. The time for the doctor's visit had passed; and if, as must have been the case, she had discovered his absence, she would probably be watching with considerable uneasiness for his return.

To find a pretext for quitting the station was comparatively easy. But to invent such a pretext as would prevent Gilbert from accompanying him, in the present jaded and overwrought state of his brain, he found unexpectedly difficult. Meanwhile the minutes were slipping away; nearly half the time left to him before the departure of the London train had gone; and as they continued their horrible pacing of the deserted platform, no plan that had any probability of success in it would suggest itself to his mind. The misery of these moments was acute.

Gilbert was watching him closely. Waveney's uneasiness appeared to him by no means an unnatural sequel to his strange indifference about his train. What did it mean? When and whither was he really going? Gilbert resolved not to lose sight of him until he had seen him take his ticket for London or . . .

The device Waveney hit upon at last was simple enough. Stopping under the clock, he turned suddenly to Gilbert and said, 'I have still about half an hour left before my train is due. There are some old friends of mine who live a few minutes' walk from the station; I think I shall go and see them. I shall find you here, I suppose, when I come back?' he added with a want of ceremony which his tone did not diminish.

The announcement produced a profound impression upon Gilbert.

'I will come with you as far as your friends' door, Keyworth,' he said, making a friendly effort (which was with difficulty eluded) to regain his hold of Waveney's arm.

Waveney swore. But unless he quarrelled with him, how could he prevent the fellow from accompanying him? Waveney glanced once more at the clock, and then turned to lead the way to Leigh's door.

The night was dark. Since Waveney had come out rain had begun to fall. The station was situated at some distance from the town, the interval being filled by a suburb of cheap houses built upon what had before been a stretch of sooty common, the remains of which might still be seen in the numerous open spaces among the loose roads and unfinished streets of this rather mean,

lower middle-class neighbourhood. At night the by-roads of the suburb were dark and lonely; and, in winter, unpleasantly muddy.

The darkness and solitude were not without effect upon Waveney. The mere presence of Gilbert was trial enough to his patience, and to feel that he was being trifled with and baffled by him was more than his temper could endure. A longing to fall upon him—to fall upon him, and, first, wring from him a confession of his guilt, and then exact a summary vengeance for his deeds—seized Waveney, and the memory of Leigh's sufferings gave it the strength of a great temptation in the silence of the empty road.

At the corner of the last street he paused. It seemed to him as if he were leading Gilbert to the very deathbed of the man he had wronged. Poor Leigh was beyond the reach of his malice, but Waveney shrank from the mere thought of Gilbert's being near to him at such a time. He resolved to make another effort to escape.

Gilbert anticipated him. He declared his intention of accompanying him to his friends' door. Waveney hesitated for a moment, then yielded and moved on.

They passed down the road till at Leigh's door they parted. Waveney, after a few anxious moments, for he feared some ill chance might perhaps bring Maggie to the door, passed in, and Gilbert was left standing beneath the window of the dying man.

He stood there for some moments gazing at the house as if he hoped to learn its secrets by the sheer intensity of his observation. Then he moved to a lamp, taking out his watch when he reached it. It was many seconds before he moved again. He kept his watch in his hand as if the sight of it helped him in the calculation upon which he was engaged. Presently he replaced the watch and looked about him. At that moment the door of Leigh's house opened and a woman came out.

It was the landlady's daughter. Before she had crossed the few feet of garden to the outer gate Gilbert had decided to speak to her. He moved from the lamp-post and reached her as she turned from the gate.

'I see you come from No. 8,' he said. 'May I ask whether a gentleman and his daughter are lodging there? I think 8 is the number I want.'

'Yes,' said the woman, 'we have a gentleman and his daughter lodging with us.'

'Thank you,' said Gilbert. And he moved as if he would pass her.

'Were you going to call now?' the woman inquired.

'Yes; is the gentleman at home, can you tell me?'

She hesitated for a moment. 'You—you don't happen to have heard, then, that—that the gentleman is very ill?'

'Ill? No, I have not heard of it.'

'Yes,' said the woman; 'at least,' she hesitated again, 'it is worse than that really.'

'Worse?' he repeated. 'You don't mean that——' the words died on his lips.

'Yes, he has just passed away, poor gentleman! The end has come very sudden at last. The doctor expected he would live a few hours. I am going now,' she added, 'to the chemist to get something he has ordered for the lady. The shock, coming sudden like this, seems quite to have broken her down.'

Gilbert asked the woman another question or two before he let her go. When she had left him he turned back and strolled towards the station.

'Extraordinary,' he murmured. 'It is really an extraordinary thing. But how lucky it was I came with him!'

(To be continued.)

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